

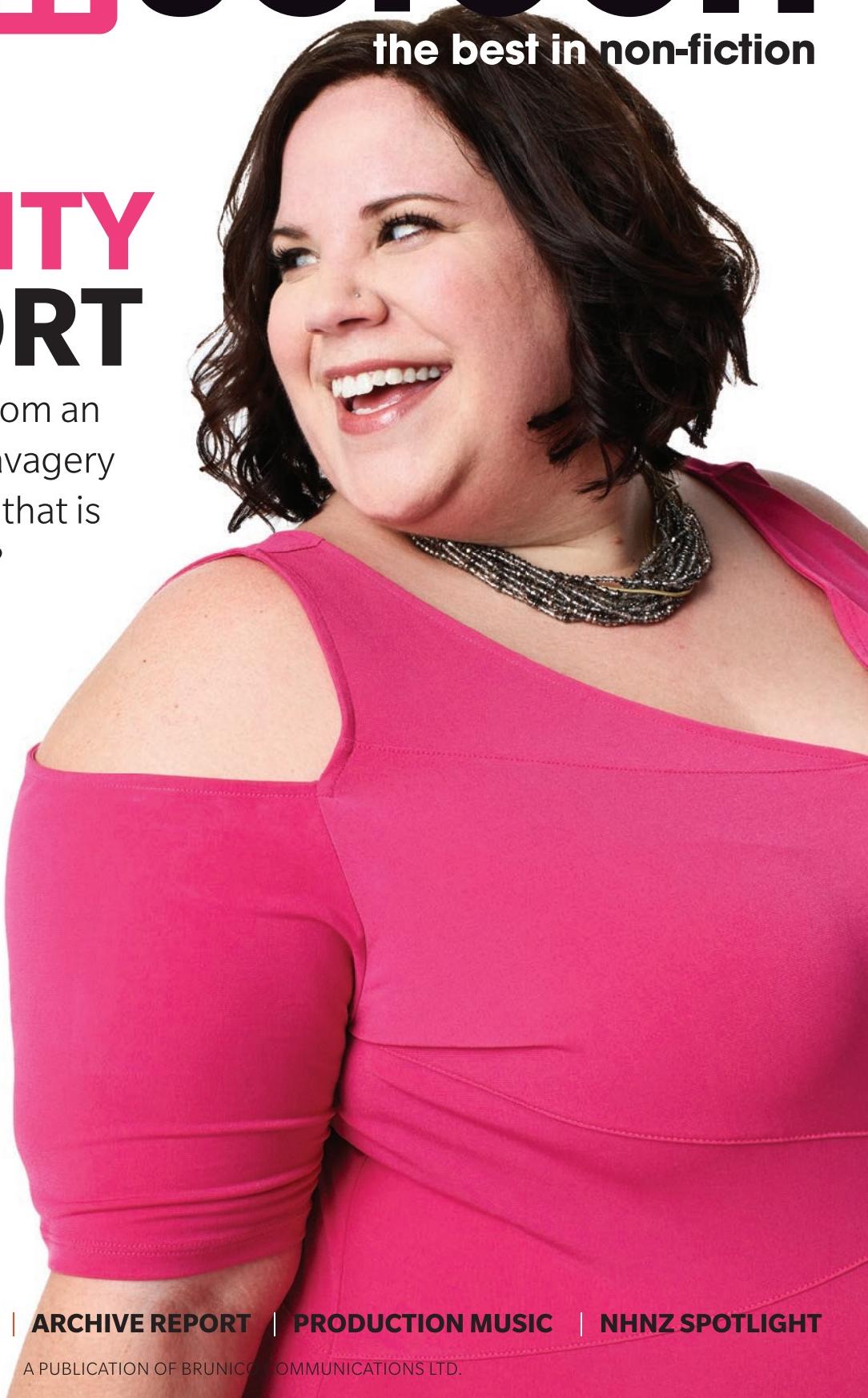
MAY / JUNE 17

real screen™

the best in non-fiction

THE REALITY REPORT

Are we moving from an era of sass and savagery to programming that is noticeably nicer?



US \$7.95 USD
Canada \$8.95 CDN
Int'l \$9.95 USD

ALSO: DOC FOCUS | ARCHIVE REPORT | PRODUCTION MUSIC | NHNZ SPOTLIGHT

A PUBLICATION OF BRUNICO COMMUNICATIONS LTD.



Be LEGENDARY



WARNER/CHAPPELL
PRODUCTION MUSIC

MUSIC FOR UNSCRIPTED PROGRAMMING

WARNERCHAPPELPM.COM

1.888.615.8729

NASHVILLE / NEW YORK / LONDON
LOS ANGELES / PARIS / SALT LAKE CITY / HAMBURG

[f FACEBOOK.COM/WARNERCHAPPELPM](https://www.facebook.com/WARNERCHAPPELPM) [t TWITTER.COM/WCPROMUSIC](https://twitter.com/wcpromusic)



contents May/June 17



History's America: Promised Land is one of the new projects coming to U.S. cable TV this year.

realscreen awards

Look for the annual Realscreen Awards special section in the center of this issue.



The painstaking process of restoring color to 20th century American history.



on the cover

Whitney Way Thore, star of TLC's *My Big Fat Fabulous Life*, is all about high energy and optimism — a sign of reality TV's shift to positivity?

25

Blue Ant Media is working years in advance to deliver content for Camp Zambia.

BIZ

- What steps can you take to look out for employees working with disturbing content?; Chris Palmer on the value of thank you letters 9

AUDIENCE AND STRATEGY

- Unscripted slates for U.S. cable nets 13

SPECIAL REPORTS

REALITY REPORT

- Is reality TV getting kinder?; Making the case for courtroom reality 19

DOC FOCUS

- Camp Zambia puts an ambitious doc filmmaking model to the test; A political world full of political docs 25

ARCHIVE AND PRODUCTION MUSIC

- America in Color breathes new life into the country's epic past; Painting an audio portrait for *Planet Earth II* 33

NHNZ SPOTLIGHT

- Dunedin's production shop celebrates 40 years 39

THINK ABOUT IT

- Premium midform takes shape; Are network notes getting out of hand? 40

INGENIOUS

- A look at HBO doc legend Sheila Nevins' new book 42



CHINA: LAND OF OPPORTUNITY?

News of the return of *American Idol* to ABC — one year after the farewell season aired on Fox — has many in the industry focused on formats, and asking whether there's room for new ideas in the market.

A version of that question is bound to be on the minds of Syco Entertainment executives as they play a watch-and-wait game over the next few weeks.

The first of what is expected to be a number of large-scale formats developed in China by the production arm of the Simon Cowell-fronted media company with Star China International Media was expected to launch in late May. Fingers are crossed the shiny floor offering (billed as a general talent show with a twist) will find a large audience...and quickly. The chances of regional success are good. Celebrity-led reality TV continues to have strong traction with Chinese audiences, with singing competitions such as *Come Sing with Me*, *Hidden Singer* and *I am a Singer* among the country's most-watched shows.

That the format will air in primetime on CCTV, China's largest broadcaster, and has Cowell's star-making stamp of approval only increases the chances it will land in the top 10 in the debut season.

But, under the very specific terms of its partnership, Syco won't know until the fall, when the format is introduced at MIPCOM, whether its Asian gamble has paid off.

Indeed, the company won't be the only one watching how well the format sells on the international market as international producers weigh the challenges and opportunities opening up in the world's most populous and, increasingly, prosperous nation.

Already complex, China's TV landscape recently became trickier to navigate when strict new rules capping the overall number of foreign formats coming into the country were ushered in. The government also imposed an outright ban on Korean productions, which had previously accounted for 40% of formats sold in the country.

The move was strategically designed to build up China's in-house development, creativity and production capacity, and decrease reliance on outside expertise. At the same time, it has stirred up interesting possibilities for foreign format specialists looking to tap China's TV spending dollars, estimated at US\$8.4 billion, behind only Japan, Britain and the U.S.

Syco and Star China inked their deal just before Christmas with a long-term goal of producing several hits together. China's rules mean Star China owns the IP and pays for most of the development and expenses, while both companies have a stake in the international distribution.

Michel Rodrigue, CEO of the format consultancy firm The Format People, and the negotiator behind the deal, sees it as a good fit for a prodco with serious format chops and a media company with the money and ambition to become a much bigger player at home and abroad.

"The ideas come from both sides. The Chinese partners will not accept ideas from the West that they don't think will get a good rating in their territory, and vice versa," says Rodrigue. "It feels like a win-win situation."

Ultimately, he adds, "We'll know it when the first sales of that deal start to happen." It won't be long now.

Cheers,
Darah Hansen
Managing Editor

May + June 17 Volume 20, Issue 4

Realscreen is published 4 times a year by Brunico Communications Ltd., 100-366 Adelaide Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1R9 Tel. 416-408-2300 Fax 416-408-0870 www.realscreen.com

VP & Publisher **Claire Macdonald** cmacdonald@brunico.com

Editor at Large and Content Director **Barry Walsh** bwalsh@brunico.com

Managing Editor **Darah Hansen** dhansen@brunico.com

Research Editor **Jessica Mach** jmach@brunico.com

Associate Editor **Meagan Kashty** mkashty@brunico.com

Senior Writer **Danielle Alcini** dalcini@brunico.com

Staff Writer **Selina Chignall** schignall@brunico.com

Contributing Writers **Michael Cascio**, **Ivana Kirkbride**, **Jessica Mach**, **Chris Palmer**

Associate Publisher **Carrie Gillis** cgillis@brunico.com

Senior Account Manager **Kerry Lanctot** klanctot@brunico.com

Account Manager **Kristen Skinner** kskinner@brunico.com

Marketing & Publishing Coordinator **Grace Li** gli@brunico.com

Creative Manager **Andrew Glowala** aglowala@brunico.com

Art Director **Mark Lacoursiere** mlacoursiere@brunico.com

Print Production & Distribution Supervisor **Andrew Mahony** amahony@brunico.com

Event Producer **Tiffany Rushton** trushton@brunico.com

Webmaster **Farhan Quadri**

AUDIENCE SERVICES

Data Integrity and Customer Support Supervisor **Christine McNalley** cmcnalley@brunico.com

CORPORATE

President & CEO **Russell Goldstein** rgoldstein@brunico.com

VP & Editorial Director **Mary Maddever** mmaddever@brunico.com

VP & Publisher, *Kidscreen* **Jocelyn Christie** jchristie@brunico.com

VP Administration and Finance **Linda Lovegrove** llovegrove@brunico.com

Senior Director, Events and Creative Services **Brenda Wilford** bwilford@brunico.com

Senior Director, IT and eBrunico **Eddie Ting** eting@brunico.com

All letters sent to *realscreen* or its editors are assumed intended for publication. *Realscreen* invites editorial comment, but accepts no responsibility for its loss or destruction, howsoever arising, while in its office or in transit. All material to be returned must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publisher.

ISSN number 1480-1434 © Brunico Communications Ltd. 2017

U.S. Postmaster: Send address changes or corrections to *realscreen*, PO Box 1103, Niagara Falls, NY, 14304 | Canadian Postmaster: Send undeliverables and address changes to *realscreen*, 8799 Highway 89, Alliston ON L9R 1V1. Canada Post Publication Agreement No. 40050265 Printed in Canada

To subscribe, visit www.realscreen.com/subscribe, email realscreencustomercare@realscreen.com, call 416-408-2448, or fax 416-408-0249. Subscription rates for one year: in the US, US\$59.00; in Canada, CDN\$79.00; outside the US and Canada, US\$99.00.

™ *Realscreen* is a trademark of Brunico Communications Ltd.



Factual that fascinates
from talent that resonates



THE TRUTH ABOUT...

STRESS

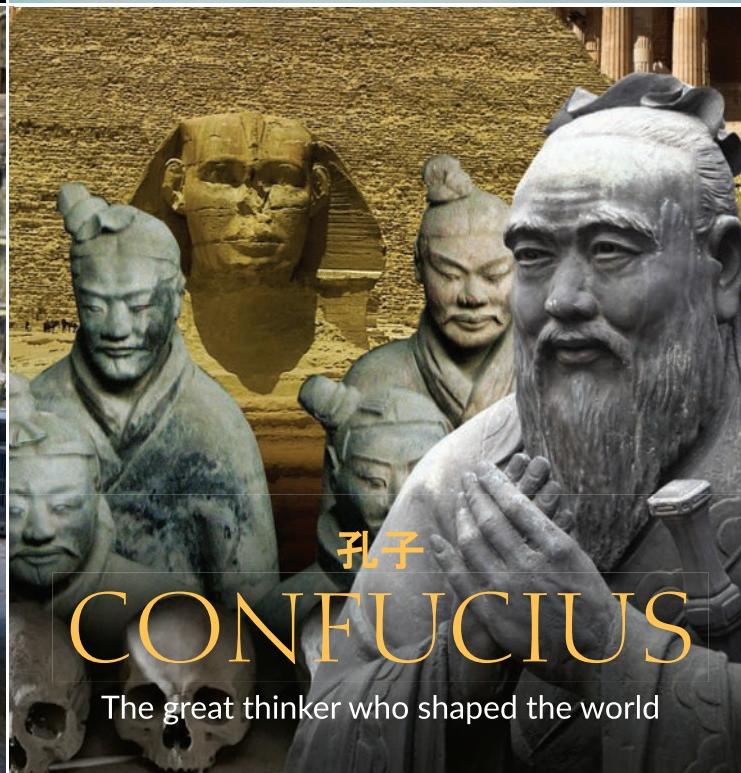
SUGAR

SLEEP

In three riveting documentaries...



Ground breaking research reveals SHOCKING revelations
about long term effects and how to change them.



And now welcoming

raw

and



to the all3media family



Get ready to pull out all the stops

In January 2018, the Realscreen Summit will celebrate its 20th anniversary, and we are going to be pulling out all the stops to celebrate this momentous occasion. Details will be forthcoming over the next few months, but please make sure you save the date.

The anniversary edition will take place from Sunday, Jan. 28 to Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, DC.

From humble beginnings at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in 1999, with just over 300 delegates in attendance, the Realscreen Summit has evolved into the world's largest conference and market for the unscripted and factual entertainment community.

We couldn't be prouder of what we have accomplished together.

As we start to plan the celebrations for the big anniversary event, I'm putting out an open call to all of you to share some of your favorite memories of Summits past. I'm sure that many of you have photos and anecdotes that will stir some memories for folks who have been in attendance over the years. Please feel free to share them with me at cmacdonald@brunico.com and we'll come up with a plan on how best to showcase them.

Right now, the team is putting the finishing touches on the 9th edition of Realscreen West and the Realscreen Awards show. On behalf of the content team, I'd like to extend a huge thanks to this year's advisory board members who went above and beyond to help shape the conference content and secure us an A-list speaker lineup: Simon Andreae, Denise Contis, Charlie DeBevoise, Leslie Greif, Sally Habbershaw, Ivana Kirkbride, Gena McCarthy, Howard T. Owens, Ben Relles, Chachi Senior and Lori York.

The luscious setting of the Fairmont Miramar Hotel, an incredibly strong line-up of keynotes, panelists and hosts, and really meaningful networking opportunities once again promise a tremendously productive market.

Welcome! And to those of you who couldn't make it to Santa Monica, make sure you get those Summit dates in your calendar now.

'til next time, go well.

Claire Macdonald
VP, Publisher
realscreen

UPCOMING ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

Editorial features: MIPCOM Picks, Lifestyle Genre Focus, Formats Focus and our Natural History & Science Focus.

Bonus distribution:

MIPCOM, World Congress of Science & Factual Producers, IDFA.

Booking deadline:

Sept. 6

For information on any of these opportunities, to book your MIPCOM listing or if you're interested in sponsorship or private meeting space at Realscreen Summit 2018, call *realscreen* sales at 1 416 408 0863.



WORLD'S MOST

EVIL KILLERS

LAUNCHED WITH
+82%
ON SLOT AVERAGE

THE GRIPPING REAL-LIFE STORIES OF THE WORLD'S
MOST TERRIFYING AND PROLIFIC KILLERS

20 X 46'



Catalogue: www.keshetinternational.com Contact us: info@keshetinternational.com
Twitter: @KeshetIntl Facebook: KeshetInternational Instagram: @KeshetInternational



A magazine cover for "ARABIA MOTORS" featuring a blue sports car in the background. In the foreground, a woman in a red dress looks at her phone, flanked by two men; one on the left is eating a sandwich, and the other on the right is smoking a cigarette. The text "THE GULF'S MOST POPULAR MOTORING MAGAZINE" is at the top, and "13x30" is in the bottom right corner.

ARABIA MOTORS
THE GULF'S MOST POPULAR MOTORING MAGAZINE
13x30

A promotional image for the TV show "CLOSE UP with The Hollywood Reporter". It shows a group of people seated around a long wooden table in a studio setting. The title "CLOSE UP" is in large white letters, with "with The Hollywood Reporter" in smaller text below it. "14x60" is in the bottom right corner.

CLOSE UP
with *The Hollywood Reporter*
14x60

A promotional image for the TV show "Six Feet Under". Six men in suits are standing in a row against a white background. "14x60" is in the bottom right corner.

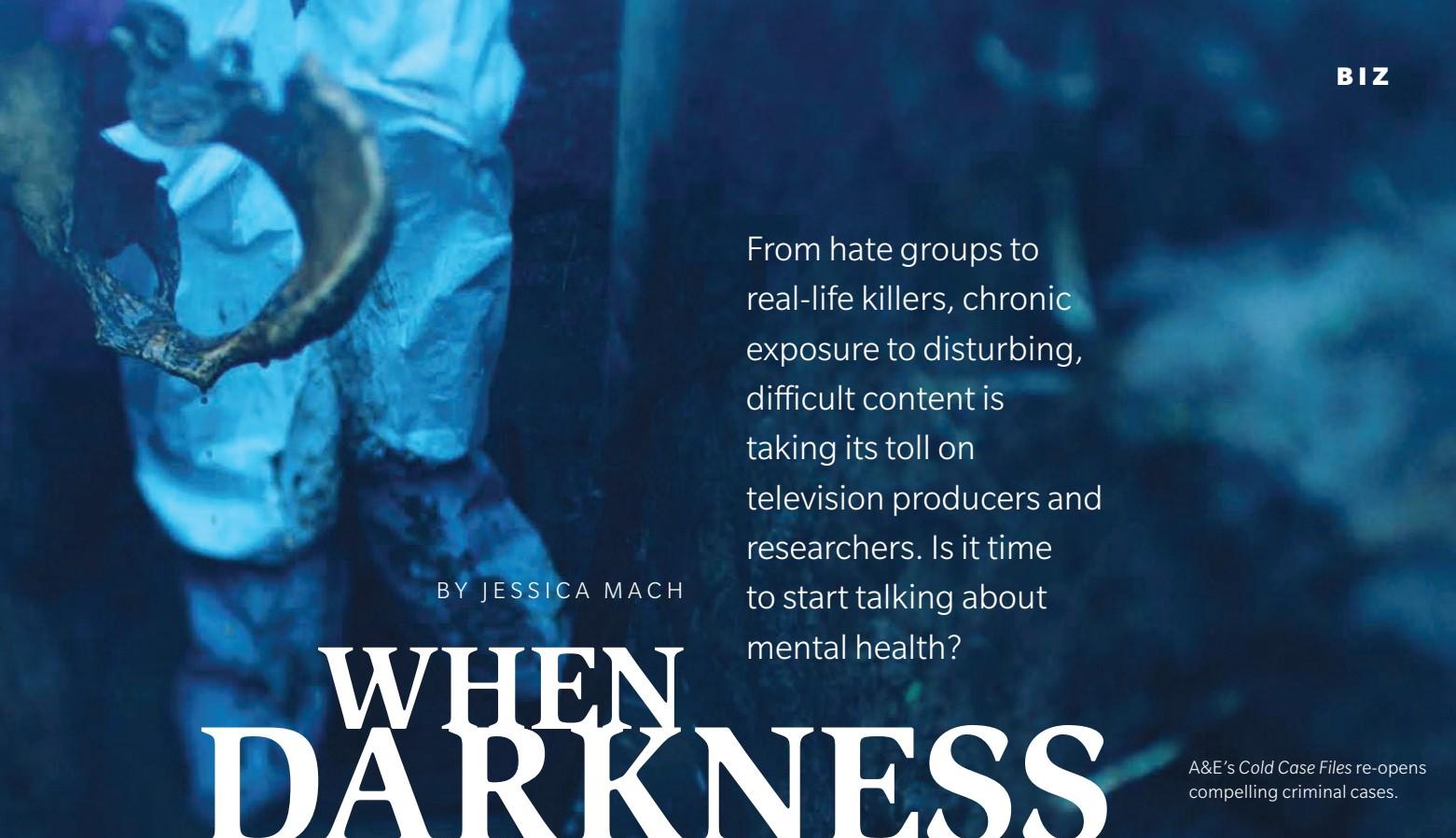
14x60

A promotional image for the TV show "EXPOSED: LIGHTS, CAMERA, CAUGHT! REAL CRIMES COMMITTED BY CELEBRITIES". It features five mugshot-style portraits of celebrities: Bill Cosby, Anna Nicole Smith, Bernie Madoff, Lou Pearlman, and Tommy Chong. The title is in large gold letters at the top, and "6x60" is in the bottom right corner.

EXPOSED
LIGHTS, CAMERA, CAUGHT!
REAL CRIMES COMMITTED BY CELEBRITIES
Bill Cosby Anna Nicole Smith Bernie Madoff
Lou Pearlman Tommy Chong
6x60

A promotional image for the TV show "SUPER-FAN BUILDS". It features a man in a crown sitting on a toilet built from swords, resembling the Iron Throne. The title "SUPER-FAN BUILDS" is in large white and orange letters at the top, and "11x30" is in the bottom right corner.

SUPER-FAN BUILDS
11x30



From hate groups to real-life killers, chronic exposure to disturbing, difficult content is taking its toll on television producers and researchers. Is it time to start talking about mental health?

BY JESSICA MACH

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS

A&E's *Cold Case Files* re-opens compelling criminal cases.

Last fall, Matt Goerzen began dedicating eight hours a day, five days a week, to tracking down internet trolls, security researchers, media manipulators and hackers. An associate producer and researcher for Viceland's *Cyberwar*, Goerzen is tasked with investigating the dark ecosystem of cyberwarfare. Since joining the network, he's pursued stories on tech developed to surveil activist communities, memetic warfare and malware that recruits unwitting devices for DDoS (distributed denial of service) attacks.

It's a bleak, if fascinating, landscape to spend any amount of time in. For the episode on memetic warfare, the *Cyberwar* team closely perused white supremacist websites. The anti-immigrant Soldiers of Odin – classified as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2016 — is another community with whom the series' host, Ben Makuch, has spent a substantial amount of time, in the name of research.

"I knew what I was getting into," Goerzen says of his job. But, he adds, "there have definitely been a couple of moments...where I can feel things were getting dark, and I kind of had to step back."

On a recent episode of the podcast *Unscripted and Unprepared*, produced by Jimmy Fox in partnership with *realscreen*, Investigation Discovery EVP Jane Latman expressed a similar sentiment.

"It does affect me," said Latman at the time, when asked about the darkness of ID's true crime content. "I've always said that we laugh more than any other network on cable. We laugh all the time because I think we know that we're dealing with such heavy, serious, dark things."

Still, she confessed, "I have nightmares."

Latman and Goerzen are among many in the industry working with content that could be described as psychologically difficult. Their accounts speak to a little-explored industry issue: consistent exposure to disturbing content and the toll that it takes on workers.

This is not an entirely new concern. In explicitly high-risk labor like that of human rights workers and first responders, stress and trauma stemming from overexposure are gaining recognition as occupational liabilities. This is partly due to institutional efforts to reconcile high turnover rates in these fields. In 2013, for instance, the American Psychiatric Association updated the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) to classify working with disturbing imagery as a pathway to post-traumatic stress disorder.

In other fields, discourse about work-related trauma is only starting to gain traction.

In journalism, for example, exposure to disturbing events or sources can be commonplace. Dialogue about its risks is certainly present, especially in relation to war correspondents or journalists covering explicitly violent topics. Following the State of Arkansas' announcement in March that it was seeking to execute eight men over the course of 11 days, publications ranging from the *Columbia Journalism Review* to the *Washington Post* considered the emotional toll the events would take on the journalists permitted to cover it. In May, Steve Ladurantaye, managing editor with the CBC, tweeted about the training that the Canadian pubcaster provides journalists covering the dark net: a day-long course on how to cope with repeated exposure to triggering imagery.

In general, however, conversations about ethics in journalistic practice are oriented more around the responsibilities that journalists hold towards their subjects than the responsibilities that media outlets hold towards their journalists. That reporters will be exposed to disturbing events is assumed; the risk is inherent to the job. Meanwhile, discourse around the degree of ethical conduct owed to subjects of journalistic inquiry is consistently present, canonized in literature like Janet Malcolm's classic 1989 study *The Journalist and the Murderer* and Gay Talese's controversial 2016 *The Voyeur's Motel*. Popular



Cyberwar host Ben Makuch interviewed the anti-immigrant group Soldiers of Odin in Québec for Vice News.

podcasts like *Missing Richard Simmons* and *Serial* have recently provoked similar conversations.

Negotiating between journalistic integrity — which prioritizes accurate reporting — and a considerate treatment of subjects gives rise to its own set of risks, though.

In television, production staff that pursue journalistic work know such risks well.

"We had one case of a child being murdered and assaulted," says Ari Mark, co-founder of AMPLE, the production company behind A&E's *Cold Case Files* reboot. "We're speaking to the mother of the child. Speaking to her stepfather. We're speaking to her brother."

What's difficult, he adds, is asking when to say "when."

"You put this mother through a 12-hour interview...there's a very fine line of 'How far can you push the subject?'"

The issue is also prominent at Woodcut Media, a UK indie that holds a large focus in true crime, with credits including *Murdered in the Line of Duty*, *Britain's Most Evil Killers* and *World's Most Evil Killers*. According to executive producer Jinal Patel, a standard practice at the company is to contact the family members of spotlighted victims, to inform them that a program is being developed and, thus, to offset the shock of seeing their son, daughter, sibling or parent on television.

"One of our members of staff, she had to call [a] mother and the mother basically shouted, refused and said, 'Just leave me alone, stop contacting me.'" The incident was a source of stress among Woodcut's staff.

Harassment is another liability of this line of work. For Goerzen, the stakes are particularly salient, given the advanced technical skills of his subjects and their readiness to weaponize them. "One troll I was trying to interview — he wrote a very nasty email to me in response to one of my emails, and also screenshotted the email I sent him, and posted it on his blog. So all of his white nationalist friends could see it and ridicule me," he says. "I was angry. My inclination would've been to raise the stakes and kind of fuck with him. But, of course, as someone who works at [Viceland], it wouldn't have been professional, and it would've led to escalating it. And this guy is a hacker."

Goerzen's reluctance to engage was mirrored by all of the producers interviewed for this story. The overwhelming sentiment was to refrain from pushing back — if not necessarily against harassment, then against the opinions or questionable accounts related by subjects.

"Sometimes we talk to the killers," says Kate Beal, co-founder of Woodcut. "The person who has to do that has to be non-judgmental, they have to be journalistic, they have to be professional," she continues. "You can't go in there with an agenda."

Goerzen agrees that granting subjects the space to talk, and facilitating the conversation from a position of impartiality or even measured empathy, often results in better reporting. But it is a strategy that can lead to feelings of ambivalence, and even anxiety.

"In the moment, I just kind of try to ignore it, and keep the person talking," says Goerzen of interviewing his subjects, many of whom verbalize explicitly racist views. He adds that seeing the subject talk with minimal intervention gives the viewer a better understanding of their character. "[But] there's always this weird anxiety that by acting as if it's totally normal to hear someone being virulently anti-semitic in a very casual manner — and not pushing back on that

as someone talking to them — you have a weird anxiety that you're also normalizing it."

As production companies demonstrate a mounting readiness to tackle dark and difficult subjects, it bears posing the question: is it time to start a conversation about the mental health needs of production staff, much like the ones that have begun around first responders and journalists?

Some industry professionals feel a more productive way of pursuing this question might be to consider what production companies are actually capable of.

For Mark, accommodating the safety of his employees takes priority. But there's a limit to what he can offer.

"We had an editor who looked at the footage [of a child being murdered]...He came up to me and said, 'Look, I can't edit this.' We were like, 'We get it, no problem. I wouldn't edit it either.' Mark reassigned the editor, but this isn't always possible.

"Having a colleague who empathizes and is experiencing the same thing is important. Otherwise it could get super, super dark."

Kate Beal



"It's a freelance business, I think people understand this," he says. "If it's the only episode [we need to work on], it's like, 'Look — it's this or nothing.'"

At present, moving employees or alternating them between difficult and more lighthearted content appears to be the most common course of action taken by production companies. Another policy for AMPLE is to be explicit with potential employees about the type of content they will be working with.

At Woodcut, a similar hiring practice is in place, in addition to monthly staff meetings.

"Every month I have a catch-up with our entire team for whatever production it is that we're working on related to crime series," says Patel.

"It's a chance for the team to really express themselves and say if there are any issues that they're struggling with. And they all know that they can come talk to myself or Kate (Beal) at any point, about anything that they're struggling with."

As for the future? "We are taking every challenge as it comes," Beal says. "We're trying to be a good employer that people want to work with and we want to attract the best talent to work with us."

For Goerzen, cultivating an atmosphere of open dialogue is key.

"We talk," he says of his colleagues on *Cyberwar*. "I think without that, it would get very dark. Having a colleague who empathizes and is experiencing the same thing is important. Otherwise it could get super, super dark. 'Cause you just get consumed by this content.'



BEST PRACTICES: THE VALUE OF THANK YOU LETTERS

BY CHRIS PALMER AND
SHANNON LAWRENCE

Professional and personal interactions are based on give and take — helping a friend find a job, providing a letter of recommendation, showing up at a goodbye party, etc. Many times we ask favors of our friends, colleagues and contacts, who happily oblige out of goodwill and respect for us. Although we may thank them profusely on the spot, nothing demonstrates appreciation better than a traditional thank you letter. Thank you notes show that you have thought about and are truly grateful for what someone else has done for you. They are valuable tools of social interaction that can benefit both parties. Yes, writing thank you notes take time and effort, but it is well worth it.

Here are five reasons thank you notes are valuable.

They show courtesy. Thank you notes are, first and foremost, a way to acknowledge that you appreciate what a person has done to help you. Sending a thank you note is a traditional gesture of politeness, showing your recognition that the person has made a special effort for you and formally expressing appreciation.

They demonstrate professionalism. Sending thank you notes is a demonstration of professional etiquette. At the same time it ensures that you and the recipient have a record of your interaction for future reference.

They conclude the experience on a positive note. Thank you notes wrap up an interaction or favor, indicating that the experience has concluded successfully. The notes are a way to communicate the results of the favor, and make both parties feel satisfied with the interaction that occurred.

They open up opportunities for continued engagement. In addition to marking the end of an interaction, thank you notes are gateways to future interaction. They should contain contact information or a business card so that both parties can pursue this connection to their mutual benefit in the future.

They open up opportunities for similar assistance to other individuals.

By extending the courtesy of a well-expressed thank you note, you strengthen the possibility that the person thanked will be willing to step forward to help someone else. The reach of professional generosity grows, resulting in a wider benefit.

For thank you notes to be most effective, it is important to know when and how to send them.

Here are three tips, some of which may surprise you:

Send them as soon as possible after your interaction.

Promptness is key when sending a thank you note. The notes should be sent no later than a few days following the original interaction. If you send a thank you note too late, it may look like a low-priority afterthought, and the recipient may think you are not sincerely appreciative.

Send them by snail mail whenever possible.

Email is impersonal and, in most cases, insufficient for a thank you. The time and consideration needed to send a stationery thank you note parallels the appreciation you have for your recipient. A handwritten note with a signature gives the thank you a real-life, personal mark of value. However, if you cannot send a letter ...

Give the person a call. The next best thing to a written, paper thank you note is a phone call. It takes time and attention to make a thank you call, and the call is a personal way to reach out to your recipient.

Sending thank you notes is an important courtesy. It is also an action that can benefit your interpersonal relations and professional growth.

Professor Chris Palmer is director of American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and author of three books, including Confessions of a Wildlife Filmmaker and Now What, Grad? Your Path to Success After College. Shannon Lawrence is a filmmaker and MFA candidate at American University. •

Friends, colleagues bid goodbye to Proper Television's Guy O'Sullivan

Brent Montgomery first met Guy O'Sullivan, a pioneer in Canadian factual television, five years ago at an industry market. The ITV America CEO remembers the two "immediately clicked" and soon became friends.

Montgomery says that no matter where he was in the world, he would often make a beeline to hang out with O'Sullivan at a cocktail party or industry event.

"I don't remember him ever not smiling," he says.

Montgomery's comments come as the production world bids goodbye to O'Sullivan. The president of Toronto indie Proper Television, whom Montgomery regards as Canada's best producer, died in early April. He was 49.

O'Sullivan founded Proper in 2004.

The company went on to produce series such as the CBC docuseries *True North Calling*, *Tougher Than It Looks?* for Discovery Canada and the Canadian format of the culinary competition series *MasterChef Canada*, now in its fourth season. Proper has also secured the format rights to produce a local version of *The Great British Bake-Off*.

Reflecting on his friend, Montgomery tells *realscreen* he was especially impressed with O'Sullivan's ability to craft winning car show formats — a difficult task due to challenging production time frames and budgets. Yet, under O'Sullivan, Proper has created motor-focused hits such as *Vegas Rat Rods* and *Canada's Worst Driver*. Both series have recorded top spots on Discovery in their timeslots.

"He was an absolute wizard at them," says Montgomery.

Prior to launching Proper, O'Sullivan spent two decades in the television industry.

He started his career as a print journalist in his native Britain, and went on to produce and direct TV shows for the BBC between 1994 and 2000.



O'Sullivan

When he set foot in Toronto, O'Sullivan was almost instantly able to transform the standard of factual television, says Proper's VP and creative director Cathie James.

"He brought his extraordinary wit and playfulness that became a trademark for Proper," she says.

James, who joined O'Sullivan at Proper seven years ago, describes him as an extraordinary person to work with — someone who had a magnetic, larger-than-life personality.

"He motivated the people around him through his charm and strength of personality. We all wanted to please him. He was someone who never rested on his laurels," she says.

O'Sullivan also taught her that making quality television is about having the right people on board.

Moving forward, James says the team at Proper wants to honor O'Sullivan's legacy by continuing to create the quality content he would have expected of his crew. He had no tolerance for mediocrity.

"We just really miss him, but we are determined to carry on what he started," she says.

O'Sullivan's New York-based talent agent Rob Miller of Creative Artists Agency says he'll remember his client, and friend, as one of the good guys.

"He was just a beacon of hope that you gravitated to," he says.

And though the two were close for years, Montgomery says they hadn't worked on any projects together.

It was only recently — shortly before O'Sullivan's passing — that they began talking about a creative partnership that would've led to more productions across the U.S. and Canada.

In a world that can be as competitive as television, O'Sullivan had a warm presence that made those around him feel better, says Montgomery.

"The industry needs Guy more than he needed it."

— Selina Chignall, with files from Playback

Oscar-winning director Jonathan Demme dies at 73

Oscar-winning director and documentary filmmaker Jonathan Demme died April 25 at the age of 73, following complications from oesophageal cancer.

Demme was perhaps best known for the 1991 Oscar-winning thriller *Silence of the Lambs*. The film went on to garner critical and box office success, becoming only the third film to win the "big five" at the Oscars: best picture, director, actress, actor and screenplay. He also directed the 1984 concert doc *Stop Making Sense* about the Talking Heads. He would go on to direct many more docs about famous musicians, including the 2006 feature *Neil Young: Heart of Gold*, which was shot during a two-night performance Young gave at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville.

Demme's most recent musical doc, *Justin Timberlake + the Tennessee Kids*, was produced for Netflix and showed Timberlake's final performance on his 2015 20/20 Experience World Tour.

In an October 2016 review of the concert, film critic Brian Tallerico noted Demme's directorial instincts: "It's about projecting his presence, and what people feel at his shows, through a camera. It's something that Demme, the director of the best concert film of all time (*Stop Making Sense*), knows how to do better than pretty much anyone."

Social issues and those who were working to make a difference also caught the eye of Demme. In 2003's *The Agronomist*, he turned the camera to Jean Dominique, a Haitian radio journalist and human rights activist who was assassinated in 2000. Former president Jimmy Carter became the subject of the director's 2007 film, *Jimmy Carter Man from Plains*. Demme followed Carter on his U.S. tour as he promoted his provocative book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.

The director took audiences into the post-Hurricane Katrina world of New Orleans in his mini docuseries *Right to Return: New Home Movies from the Lower 9th Ward*. Speaking to his decision to shoot in New Orleans after it had been ravaged, he told *The New York Times* in May 2007, "I just thought everyone who can point a camera in the right direction should go down there and point a camera in the right direction." — SC •

BY JESSICA MACH
AND SELINA CHIGNALL

ON THE SLATE

Fan favorites, house flipping, journeys to far-flung places and a good helping of food shows are on the way from U.S. cable nets in the year ahead.

A&E

Good news for pop-culture enthusiasts: A&E is bringing back its hit franchise ‘Biography’, rebooted for a new generation across linear and digital platforms. Under the Biography banner, projects on the slate include stories about rappers Biggie Smalls and Tupac Shakur; Russian president Vladimir Putin; New York mobster John Gotti Jr.; abduction survivor Elizabeth Smart; and boxer Mike Tyson. Elsewhere, fans of Rob Lowe can watch the former teen heartthrob and his now grown-up sons (John and Matthew Lowe) as they travel the U.S. to explore infamous unsolved mysteries in *The Lowe Files* from Critical Content.

New specials include the original two-hour documentary *L.A. Burning: The Riots 25 Years Later*, marking the 25th anniversary of the infamous 1992 riots. From eOne and Creature Films, the film weaves together rare archival footage and exclusive interviews with those who witnessed the event firsthand to tell the story of a(nother) tumultuous time in American history.

And back for a second season is the controversial docuseries *Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath*. Ten fresh hour-long episodes will further explore the experiences under the church by former members. The series is produced for A&E Network by The Intellectual Property Corporation.



HISTORY

History is offering 100-plus hours of fresh content, with a heavy focus on the U.S. First among the contemporary-skewing docs is *America's War on Drugs* (Talos Films). The mini series investigates how American policies towards recreational drugs have developed over the past 50 years. *Age of Terror* (w/t), meanwhile, pivots around the “war on terrorism” that the U.S. government declared following the attacks of 9/11, tracing its historical roots and recent trajectory. The series was produced by Pulse Films. *Nutopia's America: Promised Land* (pictured) looks further back, spotlighting historical events

that provoked mass migrations to the U.S. *Frontiersmen* (Appian Way Productions and Stephen David Entertainment) similarly casts a look to the distant past by profiling iconic pioneers such as Daniel Boone, Lewis and Clark, Tecumseh, Davy Crockett and Andrew Jackson.

Magilla Entertainment's *The Cars that Made America* (w/t) and Warrior Poets' *Superheroes Decoded* (w/t) turn the focus to iconic automotive brands in the States, and the heroes and villains of comic book publishers Marvel and DC, respectively. Finally, watch for *How the 90s Change the World* (RadicalMedia), which takes a global outlook on the defining events of the 1990s.

ANIMAL PLANET

Fun," "heart" and "wild" are the official buckets for Animal Planet's newest offerings, which mostly suffuse these tones across two genres: transformational and mythbusting formats.

In the former genre is *Animal House* (Punch Drunk Pictures), a series that follows a team of designers helmed by *HGTV Design Star* winner Antonio Ballatore as they work to cultivate dreamy, pet-friendly spaces for homeowners and their pets. *Magical Elves' Cat Meets Dog* (w/t), meanwhile, endeavors to transform the strained relationships between cohabitating cats and dogs with the help of dog trainer Zoe Stathis-Sandor and cat behaviorist and *My Cat From Hell* host Jackson Galaxy. *Formats My Fat Pet* (Castleview Productions) and *Plimsoll Productions' Rescue Dog to Super Dog* (w/t) both feature pet trainers who specialize, respectively, in animal weight loss and cultivating the skills of rescue dogs. Meanwhile, *Expedition Mungo* (Blast! Films) and *Extinct or Alive* (Hot Snakes) share a mythbusting drive. Both expert-led — the former by Paul "Mungo" Mungam and latter by wildlife biologist and adventurer Forrest Galante — the two travelogue series aim to separate fact from well-established myths.

Returning programs include *Monsters Inside Me*, *My Cat From Hell*, *Pet Nation Renovation*, *Pit Bulls and Parolees*, *Tanked*, *Treehouse Masters* and *The Vet Life*, the network's most-watched new series in 2016. *River Monsters* host Jeremy Wade will also return in the new series *Monster Rivers* (w/t), exploring the health of the world's rivers.

FYI

A+E Networks' fledgling lifestyle channel is offering a slate of innovative riffs on the standards of lifestyle programming: food, relationships and home formats.

Nowhere is inventiveness more apparent than in FYI's home slate, where new series are oriented around new technologies, recent real estate trends and, well, inventiveness itself. *You Can't Turn That Into a House* (Red Arrow Industries) follows architect Kyle Davis and Missouri-based brothers Taimoor and Rehan Nana as they construct living spaces out of unlikely locations. *Prefabulous* (Vox Entertainment) jumps on the popularity of prefab homes. Finally, *Virtually Renovated* (INvelop Entertainment) sees high-end designers presenting their ideas to homeowners via virtual reality.

An upcoming slate of relationship-focused series, meanwhile, dabbles in social experimentation: *My So Called Simple Life* (Propagate Content) follows three couples as they leave their careers and possessions behind to go off-the-grid; and *A Question of Love* (Noble Savages) similarly follows three couples, this time as they move into a home with their significant other, with help from relationship expert and dating coach Damona Hoffman.



Finally, the channel's new food series are strictly competition-based. Each episode of the Collins Ave-produced *Stove Tots* (pictured above) features a new group of junior chefs and their parents as they compete against one another to reach the program's final tournament. *Man vs Master* (Kinetic Content) gives unknown chefs the opportunity to compete for an apprenticeship with a world-renowned celebrity chef. *Tiny House Nation*, *Food Porn*, *Zombie House Flipping*, *My Floating Home* and *Tiny House Hunting* are all returning to FYI with brand new seasons.

HGTV



How-to channel HGTV is rolling out a new slate of titles that build on many of its staple shows.

Spinning off the success of *Fixer Upper*, which has been renewed, is *Fixer Upper: Behind the Design* (High Noon). The behind-the-scenes companion features Joanna Gaines who shows audiences her process when creating the designs showcased in each *Fixer Upper* episode. HGTV will also franchise *Flip or Flop*, with five new duos and titles set in cities across the United States. The new series *Home Town* (RTR Media) follows Mississippi-based home renovation experts Ben and Erin Napier, who deliver custom renovations for families in their small town. *Tiny Paradise* features gorgeous homes as they are built in beautiful locations like Mexico and Hawaii, and *Mountain Life* features couples looking for their dream mountaintop home.

Upcoming and returning series on HGTV include the Scott brothers in *Brother vs. Brother* (pictured left), and *Property Brothers at Home* (both from Scott Brothers Entertainment), which has been greenlit for another season. Also hitting the air are new seasons of *Love It or List It*, *Listed Sisters*, *Good Bones* and the *House Hunters* franchise.

FOOD NETWORK

With year-to date ratings gains, the Food Network is ready to serve up some new treats alongside some returning favorites for the year ahead. *Iron Chef Gauntlet* (pictured below), hosted by Alton Brown, will feature fierce opponents, including Iron Chefs Bobby Flay, Masaharu Morimoto and Michael Symon. The on-air companion, *Iron Chef Eats*, features stars from the world of *Iron Chef* who share where they like to eat when they aren't working. Brown will also host the new competition series *Chopped: Alton's Challenge* (w/t). Guy Fieri's upcoming docuseries *Guy's Big Project* (w/t), slated for Q4, will offer fans and foodies alike a shot to have their dream show made into reality; YouTube favorite Hannah Hart hosts her new series / *Hart Food*; Chef Monti Carlo goes on a mission to help struggling restaurants

fix their food and service problems by enlisting elite Yelp reviewers in *Help My Yelp*; and in *Incredible Edible America* (w/t) comedian Jeff Dunham and his wife Audrey go on a food tour of America looking for the best eats.

New titles also include the culinary competition show *Farmers' Market Flip* hosted by Jeff Mahin; an exploration of mega meals in *Monster Food*; and *Late Night Eats*, which looks at the chefs who rule the late nights with their savory snacks and liquid creations.

Coming later this year is *Halloween Wars: Hayride of Horror*, which takes the competition out of the kitchen and all the way out into the pumpkin patch.

Returning series include *Beat Bobby Flay*, *Chopped*, *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* and *Barefoot Contessa*. Production company details were not available prior to publication.



TRAVEL CHANNEL

Investigative and history-minded commissions make up the lion's share of the Travel Channel's new programs. Josh Gates hosts *Expedition Unknown: Hunt for ExtraTerrestrials* (Snake Oil Productions), a four-part investigation that continues to pursue the paranormal direction set by Gates' search for the Yeti last fall in *Expedition Unknown* (pictured above). Gates will also host Ping Pong's *Legend Has It* (w/t), a new series that follows him as he peruses ancient locales around the world.

Journalist Ashlan Gorse and her husband Philippe Cousteau (grandson of celebrated French explorer Jacques Cousteau, and a conservationist in his own right) lead *Caribbean Pirate Treasure* (Critical Content), a new series that turns an inquisitive lens to the traces left behind by pirates and sailors. *Mysteries at the Museum* (Optomen Productions) looks to command generations-spanning appeal, spotlighting history explorer Don Wildman as he embarks on investigative adventures.

The channel is additionally set to debut various pilots. Highlights include *Yes Man* (Workaholic Productions), which follows social media star Ricky Smith as he travels across the U.S. in pursuit of the nation's wildest and most ridiculous pastimes; and *Weird America* (NorthSouth Productions), which features Irish comedian Kevin McGahern's first roadtrip across America. Returning series include *Booze Traveler*, *Bizarre Foods* and *Dive In*.

BRAVO

The NBCUniversal-owned cable net is offering a host of new shows, many of them drawing from the popularity of established brands and talent.

Southern Charm: New Orleans is the latest spin-off of enduring fan-favorite docuseries *Southern Charm* from Vainglorious Productions and InventTV. In The Big Easy version, viewers are given an exclusive glimpse into the sophisticated Creole culture of New Orleans. Longtime *Real Housewife* Bethenny Frankel and Swedish-born reality star Fredrik Eklund are pairing up as business partners in *Bethenny and Fredrik Property Project* (w/t, Leftfield Pictures and B Real Productions). Likewise, Ryan Serhant of *Million Dollar Listing New York* is back with the new real-estate focused series, *Sell it Like Serhant* (World of Wonder). Haymaker Productions is behind *Relationships*, a series that follows Charleston's most eligible singleton, Shep Rose. And, for the first time since their split, ex-couples will be brought together for one night in a camera-rigged apartment with no crew in *A Night With My Ex* (Twofour America).

Among in-development offerings are *Flippin' Exes* (Rock Shrimp Productions), which follows ex-couple Nina Klemm and Michael LeSure on their home-flipping ventures in Indianapolis; re-creation series *The High School Project* (Wilshire Studios), which looks at the lives of New York City's most elite students in the 90s; social experiment *Welcome to America* (Our House Media); and *Empty Nesters* (Left Hook Media), about parents who have sent their kids away to camp — and who plan to have fun in the meantime.

As previously announced, Danish format *Stripped* (pictured below) will see its highly anticipated premiere this summer. Finally, among the 18 returning unscripted programs to the net are *Top Chef*, *Shahs of Sunset*, *Married to Medicine*, *Below Deck*, *Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles*, *Inside the Actor's Studio*, *Summer House*, *Vanderpump Rules* and the *Real Housewives* franchise.



DISCOVERY CHANNEL

The male-skewing net is revving up the new season of *Motor Mondays* with various fresh shows for gear heads, including *Darkness*, *House of Cars* (w/t) (Coolfire Studios), *Motorheads* (w/t) (Leftfield Pictures), and *Garage Rehab* (Pilgrim). Also returning to the Monday night line-up are *Fast N' Loud*, *Diesel Brothers*, *Misfit Garage*, *Street Outlaws* and *Street Outlaws: New Orleans*.

A reboot of the Emmy-winning *Cash Cab* from All3Media's Lion USA will also hit airwaves this year, offering a fresh twist on the hit game show format that sees unsuspecting passengers ambushed by American celebrities.

From the busy city streets to desolate spaces, *Cold Case Alaska*, from M2 Pictures, will trace missing persons cases in the vast northern wilderness.

Ample and Amblin Television are taking audiences on a treasure hunt in *Cooper's Treasure* (pictured above).

Discovery is also showcasing the feature *NASA: 60 Years and Beyond* from Moxie Firecracker Films. Other features include *Rancher Farmer Fisherman* (McGee Media), which weaves together the stories of four unlikely conservationists working in America's heartland; and *Sacred Cod*, which examines the collapse of one of the world's most lucrative fisheries (Cody Wolf Productions). *Billion Oyster Project* (w/t) (Motto Pictures) and Yap Film's *Mosquito* are also slated to air on the network.

And, fans rejoice: 'Shark Week' is returning to the network, as are favorites *Naked and Afraid*, *Naked and Afraid XL*, *Deadliest Catch*, *Gold Rush* and *Bering Sea Gold*.

INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY

The true crime network has more than 660 hours of new shows planned, with 40 returning series for its slate. New titles include James Patterson's *Murder is Forever* — a true-crime series featuring best-selling author James Patterson. Former Brooklyn District Attorney's office Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi probes murder investigations in *True Conviction* (pictured right). Viewers are taken into the interrogation room in *Evil Talks: Chilling Confessions*, and the lives of people who have been tied to a single devastating incident is explored in *Shattered* (w/t).

The Wonderland Murders (w/t) takes audiences to the picturesque Pacific

Northwest that is a hotbed of serial killers. House(s) of horrors are shown in *Hotel Cecil*, *Murder Castle* and *Home Alone* (w/t). *Murder in the Heartland* recounts the crimes that tore through middle-American towns. New specials that will air throughout the year include *Son of Sam: The Hunt for a Killer* that tracks the hunt for serial killer David Berkowitz; *Keith Morrison Investigates*, featuring the veteran journalist as he covers true crime series from around the world; the exposé *Black and Blue*, looking into the current state of police affairs and race relations. Finally, *The Trial of Anthony Gray* (w/t) examines the mysterious deaths of James and Vivian Gray. Production company details were not available prior to publication.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Katie Couric returns to the network off the success of her doc, *Gender Revolution: A Journey with Katie Couric* (pictured left), with a new untitled six-part docuseries that will follow her as she talks with thought leaders who are shaping the most important, controversial and often confusing topics across the globe today. The docuseries (Katie Couric Media in collaboration with Nat Geo Studios) is slated to air in 2018. Nat Geo is also partnering with Shawn Carter (a.k.a. Jay Z) and The Weinstein Company on a new global six-episode doc series, *RACE* (w/t), which intends to give an honest and provocative look into systemic injustices in the U.S.

Also included in the network's upcoming slate is the part-scripted/part-documentary series *MARS* (Imagine Entertainment and RadicalMedia). Building on the first season, the second season of the show brings audiences back to the Red Planet, where tensions are brewing between the original mission's scientists and miners from a for-profit corporation. The 6 x 60-minute series is slated to premiere in April 2018.

NAT GEO WILD

Of special note on Nat Geo Wild's upcoming slate is 'Migration,' a new event from the channel's *Safari Live* series (WildEarth Media). Broadcasting live from the Maasai Mara, the episode captures the region's wildebeest migration in real time. Annual week-long events 'SharkFest' (pictured right) and 'Big Cat Week' are returning to the channel. Premiering as part of 'SharkFest' are *Shark Swarm* (NHNZ), which offers viewers access to rare shark feeding events; *Tiger Shark Terror* (Red Rock Films), a look into where sharks go when night falls; and *Shark v. Predator* (Earth Touch), an investigation into

the species that regard the oceanic predators as prey. 'Big Cat Week' collaborates with Nat Geo's Big Cats Initiative to raise awareness about the risks facing the world's big cat species. Set to premiere are *Jaguar vs. Croc* (National Geographic Studios), which spotlights footage from Nat Geo photographers Steve Winter and Bertie Gregory; *Cheetah Diaries* (National Geographic Studios) from filmmaker Bob Poole; *Lion Kingdom* (Terra Mater), a dramatic special that sees three prides of lions locked in a struggle for power; and *Machli* (Grey Films), which looks at a legendary tigress that reigned over a region of western India.

Starting this summer, viewers can look forward to three specials set to



air through the fall. *China's Wild Side* (NHNZ) and *Secrets of Patagonia* (Off the Fence) respectively look at Tibet and Yunna's ecosystems and the landscape of Patagonia. *Chimp Babies* (Pupfish Productions) is the latest from Nat Geo Wild strand 'Mission Critical,' and investigates Sierra Leone's endangered chimps.

Upcoming reality series include *When Nature Calls* (Outrun the Sun) and *Pikes Peak Patrol* (Michel Hoff Productions), both of which spotlight animal expert as they perform their work. Returning are *The Incredible Dr. Pol*, *Dr. Oakley*, *Yukon Vet*, *Animal ER*, *Weird But True!*, *Snake City* and *Outback Wrangler*.



TLC

TLC's slate continues to build on the programs and genres its audiences have long tuned in for — from weddings, families and relationships to sweeping, historic events.

A number of specials are on deck this year, leading with Jupiter Entertainment's *Diana: Tragedy or Treason?* (w/t), in time to honor the 20th anniversary of Diana, Princess of Wales' death in 1997.

New series rolling out include spin offs of the 90 Day Fiancé franchise, including *90 Day Fiancé: Before the 90 Days* and *90 Day Fiancé: What Now?* (w/t).

Others include: *Hair Goddess* (w/t), which follows self-made woman Christina Olivia and her family as she opens her first hair salon in Manhattan; *The Healer* (pictured left), featuring Charlie Goldsmith, who has the healing gift of touch; *Hear Me, Love Me, See Me* (w/t), a new kind of dating show that takes love out of the equation; and *Meet the Putmans*, a series that follows a family of 25 who all live under one roof.

Favorites such as *Rattled*, *Say Yes to the Dress*, *Long Island Medium* and *Sister Wives* are also returning.

CMT

Viacom-owned Country Music Television has steadily built its audience of late and is looking to add to that success with a summer slate that includes big events such as its first-ever outdoor version of CMT Crossroads with Grammy-Award winners Earth, Wind & Fire.

Returning to the network is the 12th season of *Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team* (Triage Entertainment), which follows fresh hopefuls looking to land a spot on the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders squad.

Also expected is a new season of *I Love Kellie Pickler* from 51 Minds and Ryan Seacrest Productions, featuring singer Kellie and husband Kyle as they record music and house hunt in Nashville. •

IS REALITY TV GETTING NICER?

BY DANIELE ALCINII
AND SELINA CHIGNALL

With political and social anxieties on the rise around the world, some broadcasters and producers are seeing a surge in demand for gentler programming as audiences seek a sense of home.



UPtv's Growing Up McGhee follows Rozonno and Mia McGhee and their sextuplets, now six years old.

In 1947, English poet W.H. Auden penned the six-part poetic saga *The Age of Anxiety*, exploring our human response to a fast-changing world that, at the time, seemed to be spinning off its axis.

Although the Pulitzer Prize-winning piece was published 70 years ago, similar political and social anxieties persist in modern-day life, leaving many of us scrambling to find solace from an endless cycle of worrying news.

Enter reality television with the salve. Once the go-to realm of catfights and contrived controversy, audiences are turning to their screens to find kinder, gentler programming that makes them feel good, according to a study recently commissioned by lifestyle broadcaster TLC.

"We have found our audiences have actually shifted to things that feel very comforting," says Howard



Kuryak

Lee, executive VP of development and production for TLC and GM of Discovery Life. "I think that that has some kind of a powerful connection with the way the country swung in terms of the (U.S. Presidential) election."

The study's conclusions are underscored by a ratings momentum enjoyed by the Discovery Communications-owned net. TLC reports that its ratings have surged 26% since the calendar year began, marking the broadcaster's best-rated quarter in primetime in two years and is ranked the No. 7 ad-supported cable network among W25-54. The channel

was also up double-digits versus the year prior with W18-49 (up +15%) and W18-34 (up +24%).

The successes continue to be driven by several key series hitting rating highs in their most current seasons of feel-good fare, including *Outdaughtered*, *My Big Fat Fabulous Life*, *Little People, Big World* and *Long Island Medium*. These programs, Lee says, pull from TLC's commissioning ethos of seeking out personalities and stories relatable to the average American viewer.

"People just want to feel at home," he says.

American cable television network UPtv has seen comparable gains in its advertising retention rates amid five consecutive quarters of growth. The InterMedia Partners-owned channel laser-focuses its programming strategy on super-serving what it sees as a long-underserved market with safe, cheerful content.

"More and more people are turning to TV wanting that escape to be positive and bring people together to counteract the negativity out there," says Timothy Kuryak, SVP of unscripted development and production at UPtv.

Since having rebranded from the Gospel Music Channel four years ago, UPtv's programming strategy of showcasing light-hearted content has managed to deliver strong co-viewing numbers, ranking as one of the top 20 co-viewing cable networks in Q1 2017, led by long-standing ratings hits *Bringing Up Bates* and *Growing Up McGhee*.

In Europe, where a calamitous migrant crisis continues to dominate news cycles 24/7, producers report similar demand for gentler TV. Rumpus Media's *An Immigrant's Guide to Britain* for Channel 4, for example, was deliberately crafted to address



the issues of the day, while carefully steering clear of the onslaught of negativity and angst.

"You want something that can provide an antidote to [the news] and something that can shed a different light on the big issues," Rumpus Media's joint MD Emily Hudd says.

In *An Immigrant's Guide to Britain*, comedian and first-generation immigrant Henning Wehn leads a cast of comedians and members of the public as they investigate a culture they know little or nothing about. The 4 x 60-minute docuseries offers a fresh look at highly contentious public issues (in this case, immigration), but does so in a way that encourages human connection, not more quarreling.

"We wouldn't feel happy with ourselves if we were being cruel to people or we felt like we were misrepresenting people or manipulating them in any way. We want our programs to make people laugh and make people think," Hudd says.

Jon Murray, often cited as the creator of the reality television genre with MTV's *The Real World* in 1992 and, later, *The Simple Life*, among other big successes, believes we've entered into a period in which networks and audiences alike are searching less for "kinder" content, and more for something that feels authentic.



Murray

Down syndrome, has steadily won over audiences with its positive messaging and groundbreaking vision of diversity on screen.

In season one, which aired in December 2015 — long before Brexit and President Trump rattled nerves — the series saw viewership trend upwards by 67% over the six-episode arc. It resonated particularly well with adults 25 to 54 years old, growing 84% over the season. The heart-warming series, now in its third season, returned to A&E on May 16 with a 10-episode order.

"Conflict for conflict's sake and conflict over trivial matters does not resonate with viewers. There has to be something honest and real behind what people are doing," says the veteran television executive and founder of Bumim/Murray Productions.

"The audience is pretty sophisticated about what they are watching. They've seen all kinds of reality TV, and when you use the same old formulas, it can feel canned or false."

In that vein, Bumim/Murray's Emmy-winning *Born This Way* for A&E, which has been nurtured by Murray since 2009 and follows the lives of young adults living in California with



Thompson

"The show is positive, but not whitewashed," Murray explains. "There is a lot of humor and some heartache, and that's where the program succeeded — it mirrors life."

There are those who are skeptical of the theory. Professor Robert Thompson, director of Syracuse University's Bleier Center for Television & Popular Culture, firmly rejects the notion that TV audiences, as a whole, are clamoring for a gentler reality world. He cites the continued popularity of long-standing franchises such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *The Bachelor* and *The Real Housewives* — formats that often put conflict at the center and, yet, continuously post strong ratings and have birthed equally successful spin-offs.

"If someone came out with a new and really nasty reality show that was executed in interesting ways, I think people would watch it," he reasons. "[Compassion] is harder to execute because kindness and gentleness tend to be less dramatic."

A highly publicized autumn 2016 bidding war for formattable British cookery competition *The Great British Bake Off*, however, puts Thompson's theory to the test. Negotiations between Richard McKerrow's Love Productions and the BBC, *Bake Off*'s home for seven seasons, had been underway for more than a year before falling apart at the 11th hour. Rival UK pubcaster C4 would shortly after swoop in with a reported £25 million bid (outbidding the BBC's £15 million offer) to secure the feel-good baking series to a three-year deal.

Official ratings data in the UK for 2016 proved that soft-hearted content has the potential to drive massive audiences to a network, with nine of the top 10 most-watched programs of the year coming in the form of *Bake Off* episodes.

McKerrow, who serves as creative director of Love and the mastermind behind the format, says his company is guided by a simple philosophy.

"People who are brave enough to appear as themselves on television are quite courageous," he reasons. "You have to show them in a true, honest and fair light."

It's not always about the political context of the times.

"Just be yourself, and that will ensure the best television," McKerrow advises. "Ultimately, viewers enjoy empathizing rather than being cynical."

READY TO KICK SOME A



NEW SERIES
THURSDAYS 9/8c

GO TO WETV.COM FOR YOUR LOCAL CHANNEL
#GUHHATL

WE
tv



**Sheffield
Doc|Fest
9–14
June
2017**

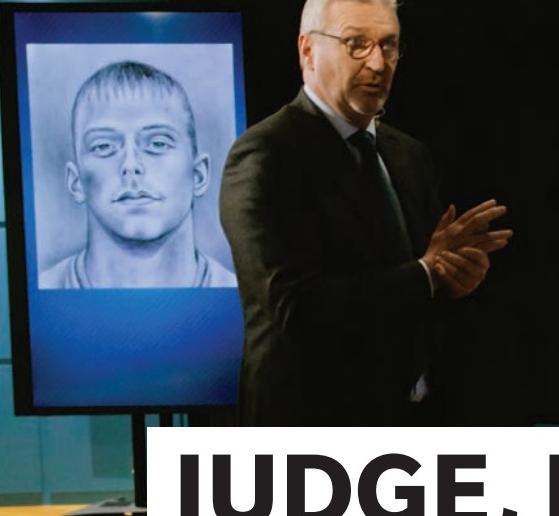
**What's Your
— Story?**



#sheffdocfest

Buy tickets:

 sheffdocfest.com



JUDGE, JURY AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

BY MEAGAN KASHTY

Production companies are getting off the bench and trying their hands at courtroom programming. But they're up against stiff competition.

There's a common stereotype when it comes to jury duty: no one wants to do it.

In theory, the idea of being summoned to do your civic duty and be a part of your country's justice system sounds like an honorable endeavor, but the reality is jury duty can be inconvenient, tedious and far from fun.

But give that job to the creative folks in the entertainment business and even the most banal of duties can start to sound like can't-miss opportunities. That's what some producers are looking to do with the next-generation of courtroom television, with varying degrees of success.

The latest true crime series from the UK's CBS Reality combines elements that make daytime courtroom TV attractive.

The Jury Room, set to air in late May, is a 6 x 60-minute series produced by First Look TV. The show re-examines real murder cases in which convicted killers have always maintained their innocence. The accepted facts of each case are presented, as originally seen by the actual trial judge and jury, to 12 members of a specially selected CBS reality jury, with viewers invited to be "the 13th jury member."

Ex-Detective Chief Inspector Colin Sutton represents the prosecution and lawyer Matt Stanbury speaks for the defense, while renowned crime reporter Will Hanrahan, best known for his work with the BBC, helps the jury and the viewers to connect the dots.

In *The Jury Room*, members of a specially selected CBS jury re-examine murder cases in which the convicted killers have maintained their innocence.

Key to a case to be chosen for the show is that there is new evidence that wasn't available when the convicted person first went to trial — or, perhaps, more advanced analysis of pre-existing evidence that may influence the jury's judgment. The action unfolds in real time as the women and men in the jury room consider each defendant's fate.

Hanrahan, a former BBC News foreign correspondent, and AMC Networks International-UK director of programming Sam Rowden serve as executive producers on the series.

The premiere episode deals with the Michael Stone murder case that shocked Britain in 1996. Twenty years on, there remains a dedicated group of campaigners convinced of Stone's innocence. They believe that further DNA testing could connect a different assailant to the scene of the crime, and a wrongfully convicted man could walk free.

Following a global true crime trend, the CBS audience has a fascination with crime and wants to be able to see it from many different angles. The channel has invested heavily in original programming consisting of in-depth and relevant real-life crime stories that resonate well with CBS Reality's audience. *Murderers and Mothers* debuted to 244,000 viewers, while *Killer Clergy* delivered 163,000 adults across its premiere run in 2016, according to CBS. Other CBS Reality originals include *Stalkers Who Kill*, *The Day I Should Have Died*, *Uncovering Melanie's Murder* and *Encounters with Evil*.



Producers are encouraging viewers to get involved in the next generation of court-themed reality TV.

While prodcos continue to experiment with true crime and courtroom programming, old syndicated stalwarts such as *Judge Judy* remain fixtures. Rowden's aim with *The Jury Room* was to see how they could create a slightly different format in the crime area and courtroom TV format, using the same credibility and no-nonsense approach Judy Sheindlin takes in her cases.

"It comes back to authenticity," she says. "What came to us was an interest in the sanctity of the jury room, because that's where you get the ordinary people debating and evaluating these real crimes."

Jury Room carries no legal weight, should the jury decide on an outcome that differs from the original court cases. But Rowden says the appeal of the show, as with most court-based reality programs, is less about the legal proceedings and more about the characters involved.

Rowden says engaging viewers is a natural progression for courtroom reality TV.

"If you look at the success of *Judge Judy*, it's all based around Judy and her ruling and opinion," she says. "We were really keen to turn that back into the hands of real people."

Besides, adds Rowden, there's not much more you can do to engage an audience than have them play a part.

Not all updates on the courtroom reality genre have seen success. *The Law Firm*, which aired in 2005, featured up-and-coming lawyers competing against each other while trying real court cases, with one lawyer eliminated each week, à la *The Apprentice*. The show was pulled following poor ratings.

In 2015, NBC greenlit the series *Law & Order: You the Jury*, which was to be produced by *Law & Order*'s Dick Wolf and reality prodco Magical Elves. In the series, legal cases would play out during an hour-long show, and the audience would be prompted to engage throughout the show. It was never produced.

And this past summer, LA-based Renegade 83, the production company behind *The Law Firm*, tried its hand at another courtroom reality show. *You The Jury* featured celebrity attorneys arguing their cases each week.

In a nod to reality competition series such as *The Voice*, *American Idol* and *America's Got Talent*, after each case was presented, viewers had the opportunity to vote to determine "America's verdict" for the case.

"It's engrossing, it's fascinating and it has real stakes," Conrad Greene, executive producer on the show, told *realscreen* before its premiere. "We're treating audiences with a certain amount of respect in that we think they're going to be smart enough to follow the cases, to engage, and to help make the decision — the right decision."

The show was cancelled after two episodes. Moral of the story? Replicating the success of daytime court TV for primetime is tricky.

"The main element for court or any other successful show is the compelling lead personality," says Bill Carroll, media consultant and former director of content strategy at Katz Television Group. "Then that personality would have to be paired with interesting cases. In daytime, the trivial can be interesting when *Judge Judy* deals with a small claims issue. But that might not be enough for prime competing with other high-budget prime productions."

Judge Judy, which premiered in 1996, continues to pull about 10-million viewers a day and is licensed in 149 international markets. Following Judy's lead are syndicated shows such as *The People's Court*, *Judge Mathis*, *Hot Bench* and a host of other courtroom programs that show no signs of being cancelled anytime soon.

But even Judy isn't comfortable spending all her time on the bench. FremantleMedia North America and Debmar-Mercury will be collaborating with co-production partner Queen Bee Prods on a six-week summer test for game show *iWitness*, which features three contestants facing off to test their powers of observation. If Judy's success in courtroom programming is any indication, prodcos that specialize in game shows might want to take note. •

"The main element for court or any other successful show is the compelling nature of the lead personality."

BY DANIELE ALCINII

GOING OFF THE GRID

Trace your finger along the 3,700-mile-long Great Rift Valley running the length of Lebanon's Beqaa Valley in Asia to Mozambique in Southeastern Africa. As the Great Rift reaches Zambia, it divides in two and its western arm becomes the lush and plentiful Luangwa Valley.

It's here, amid large concentrations of elephants, leopards and hippopotamuses, you'll find a small filming camp.

The filmmakers aren't there just to capture the abundant local wildlife. Rather, the camp represents a testing ground of sorts as natural history documentary producers seek to tame surging operating costs and on-location filmmaking lulls that can so often plague blue chip projects.

It was at a Wildscreen conference a few years ago when Love Nature International and Bristol-based indie Plimsoll Productions first hatched a plan to launch Camp Zambia, a multi-year natural history project from a single studio based in Luangwa, Zambia.

Led by Plimsoll's natural history experts

allowing for round-the-clock filming and, eventually, the production of 50 hours of wildlife and nature content in 4K, ranging from blue chip footage of animal behavior to character-led series.

"One of the things I have always been frustrated about in terms of natural history is the reason it costs so much money — it's because you tend to go out and film one behavior," Jackson, Plimsoll's president of international production, tells *realscreen*.

The ambitious location-based model would look to bridge the divide between what commissioning executives were after and the natural behaviors of wild animals. Further still, the Camp Zambia project has the potential to revolutionize the way in which wildlife production is defined by introducing cost-effective ways to produce a high volume of shows of premieme

Andrew Jackson and Martha Holmes, Camp Zambia would embed film crews in a single location for two years,

Love Nature International and Plimsoll Productions' Camp Zambia puts an ambitious, multi-year documentary filmmaking model to the test in a bid to tame surging costs and location challenges.

storytelling and technical quality.

It's no secret that blue chip natural history filmmaking is a time-consuming and costly endeavor, with behavioral films beginning at an estimated US\$500,000 per hour.

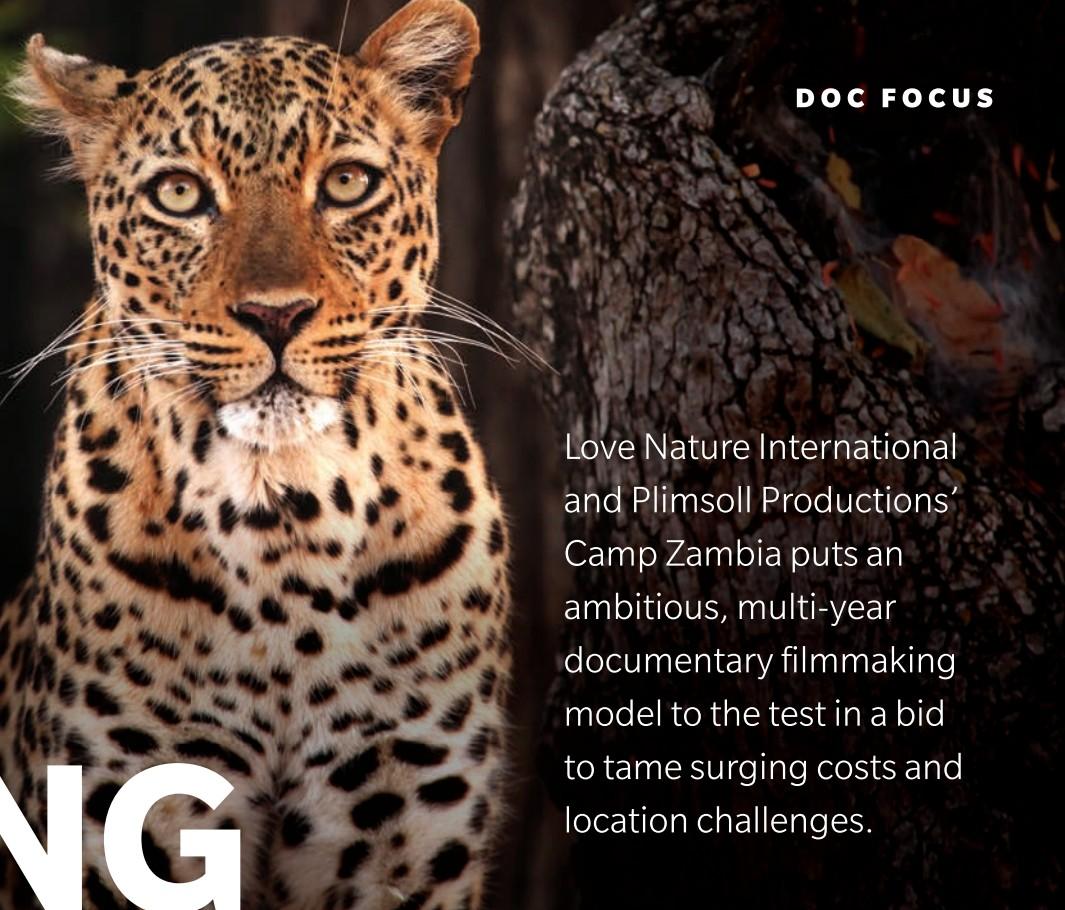
As expensive as these programs are, risk remains an ever-present prospect lurking within the tall grass and anticipating its moment to pounce. It's not atypical for filmmakers to spend eight weeks on location only to capture 15 minutes worth of workable footage, according to Jackson. Or to send an expensive film crew across the globe only for them to return without any corresponding footage whatsoever.

BBC's much-lauded *Planet Earth II*, for example, necessitated 117 separate filming trips to 40 different countries. Its total shooting days amounted to 2,089, or just over 5.7 years non-stop. Sister series *Blue Planet II*, meanwhile, spent more than 1,000 hours filming on every continent and in all of Earth's oceans.

With primary backing from Blue Skye Entertainment — the joint venture



Jackson



between Blue Ant Media and Smithsonian Networks — and a home base firmly in place, Plimsoll was able to completely remove the chance of wasted time and instead send cameramen in teams of seven, with approximately 50 cameras, into one location — the Luangwa Valley — where they were guaranteed a great deal of wildlife.

Once on the ground, filmmaking teams were able to continuously film the action so that if a pride of lions wasn't doing anything of interest, they could point their lenses to a tower of giraffes or a pod of hippos.

Instead of returning to the edit bay and leaving hours of footage on the cutting room floor, filmmakers could provide further footage, thereby feeding storylines to other series and documentaries. That freedom afforded Plimsoll the opportunity to deliver the total output of 50 hours, says Vanessa Case, EVP of content at Blue Ant Media.



Case

"We're sometimes working two to two-and-a-half years in advance to be able to commission and constantly have a rolling delivery of content."

"You don't go in necessarily knowing what you're going to get out of giraffes, but that fed into the premise of 'We don't know what we're going to get but we know we're going to get something out of this,'" she says. "Then [Jackson] has to tell us what's rich in story and we'll work with him to turn that into a creative treatment that's a workable doc for this series."

"We were filming 24 hours per day. We would film through the night. We had three teams working continuously, so they would never leave the animals," adds Jackson.

"If the lions were about to hunt, a team would be on them. As night fell, the night cameras came out and we'd follow them

through the night. The next morning, if they hadn't hunted, the day team would come around and pick them up again in the morning to wait for them to hunt."

Aiding crews as darkness fell was the military-grade night vision Selex SLX Merlin camera. The thermal-imaging camera is specially designed for superior visibility in harsh conditions and enabled crews to capture unseen nocturnal behavioral activity from more than a kilometer away clear as day — only in black and white.

The use of high-tech equipment was not without its challenges, however, as the heavy-duty night vision cameras let off an audible hum, "like an air conditioning unit," according to Jackson. The wildlife of the

Streamline the way you authorize, enable and track production spend



24/7 visibility of all production spend

Fund cards in real-time

Schedule automated, recurring funding

"**PROCAM NY IS OUR GO-TO RENTAL FACILITY. THEIR KNOWLEDGE, BREADTH OF GEAR, AND COMMITMENT TO QUALITY ARE SECOND TO NONE.**"

MARY MICHALOPOULOS, PRODUCER – WORLD OF WONDER

procamny

WWW.PROCAMNY.COM

NEW YORK LONDON MANCHESTER GLASGOW EDINBURGH

Luangwa Valley was not familiar with this new noise and cameramen feared it would interfere with their work to reveal new animal activities after the sun set.

Six weeks before the Selex camera was moved into the field, a solution was devised: a range of Land Rover SUVs would be driven across the valley with a recording of the camera's monotonous drone playing for hours on end to ensure animals in the area would grow accustomed to the unfamiliar noise.

"The majority of animals are more active at night than they are during the day," says Jackson.

"Natural history films have always cheated in the past by telling you they're showing you everything. They're not. They're showing you about 40% because at least 60% of it happens at night."

The flexibility and 24/7 film coverage afforded cameramen the opportunity to chronicle the life of a runt lion cub from day one as he struggles to find his place in the pride in *Africa's Hunters*, seasons one and two. The lion is now three years old

Plimsoll sent cameramen in teams of seven, with approximately 50 cameras, into the Luangwa Valley.



and at a critical turning point in his life. The Plimsoll team is hopeful that they will return to Zambia for a third consecutive year — if he's survived through the wet season, the cub will have to leave his pride this year in order to set up one of his own.

"We've filmed him throughout the whole of his life so far, and it would be lovely to continue that on," says Jackson.

"Because natural history does tend to go out and film specific behaviors, they're always episodic. We've been able to escape that by telling whole stories because we've been there for a long time," he says. "That is something that natural history has done in the past, but it's been due to single cameramen who've had an absolute dedication to tell a whole story.

027

Synergy in Action!



www.ZeroFeeMusic.com
011-323-666-7968

A promotional image for the realscreen summit 20th anniversary. It features a large, stylized "20" in the foreground. To the left of the "20" is the "realscreen summit" logo. To the right is the text "Reinventing the Real". In the background, the U.S. Capitol building is visible at night, with city lights and traffic blurred in the foreground.

Calling all International Delegations!

Stand out at the 20th anniversary of the most definitive global market & conference for the business of unscripted and non-fiction entertainment.

Let us help you showcase your country.

Exclusive packages now available!

CONTACT JOEL PINTO | JPINTO@BRUNICO.COM | 416-408-1376

The film crew is hopeful it will return to Zambia for a third consecutive year.

"I think we've proven that you don't have to have large amounts of money to be able to tell wonderful stories."

"I think we've proved that you don't have to have large amounts of money to be able to tell wonderful stories."

Africa's Hunters II (6 x 60 minutes) also traces an audacious three-year-old leopard that has won her first territory in Zambia's Luangwa Valley but "is mercilessly challenged by older rivals," says Jackson, and the story of a hyena cub born into power struggles attempting to maintain her position within the cackling clan.

As of April, the teams behind the African-based project have delivered 40 hours — the majority of which (30 hours) was delivered in year one. The final 10 hours of the project are currently undergoing post-production and scheduled for delivery by August. The remaining 10 hours will be made available to buyers during October's MIPCOM market in Cannes, France.

The content, which will be available for licensing through Blue Ant International, is



produced for Love Nature's global digital and linear platforms, as well as the Smithsonian streaming service in the U.S. Remaining rights will be made available to the world outside of North America.

Recent deliverables include *Growing Up Wild* (3 x 60 minutes), a character-based behavioral series following an array of species from birth to maturity; *Wild Survivor* (3 x 60 minutes), revealing the survival relationships between animal and environment; *Untamed Valley* (3 x 60 minutes), exploring some of the Luangwa Valley's most diverse habitats and the creatures within them; and *Guardians of the Wild II* (4 x 60 minutes), tracing the daily challenges facing conservationists and scientists working in the Zambian wilderness.

"It's delivered better than I genuinely thought it would, even though I promised that it would," Jackson says. "It's such a relief."

Assisting Jackson, a former head of BBC's Natural History Unit (*Frozen Planet, Africa*), with Plimsoll's production for the natural history strand are Plimsoll's head of wildlife Martha Holmes (*Blue Planet, Manhunters, Life*); and series editor James Smith (*Tribe, Amazon with Bruce Parry*).

Having since proven that the camp-based model works and now approaching the conclusion of the two-year partnership in Zambia, Blue Ant Media's Case says that the

company has been in active development and pre-production in figuring out what to do next and how to approach that project.

"We've spent a lot of time with Andrew and his team talking about what the next evolution of the camp could be," she says. "He alluded to being able to go back [to Zambia] and do a follow-up story [on the lion cub], so we've absolutely been talking about that and how many episodes does that deserve."

Similarly, the organizations involved are exploring other destinations in which a multi-year, camp-like environment can be established — with a range of deliverable hours. The list includes Sri Lanka, Borneo and beyond.

It's no surprise that Blue Ant is looking to extend its natural history slate, particularly following a recent study released by BBC Worldwide's in-house research team in conjunction with Professor Dacher Keltner, who oversees psychology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dubbed "The Real Happiness Project", the study found that watching nature programs have a direct and uplifting impact on the mood and well-being of its viewers. That, in turn, leads to "significant increases in positive emotions including awe, contentedness, joy and amusement," while significantly decreasing such negative emotions as nervousness, anxiety, fear, stress and tiredness.

Final decisions are expected imminently on the natural history camp's next iteration.

For Blue Ant Media's Love Nature business, Case looks to bring in anywhere between 100 and 150 hours of content to the slate every year.

"To deliver on that, we're sometimes working two to two-and-a-half years in advance to be able to commission and constantly have a rolling delivery of content," Case says. "In order for us to capture the right season and go into new locations, but also deliver on what I'm turning to the producers saying we need more hours here and here, we'd probably in the next couple of months be able to finalize that decision."

"We're in active conversations and we hope very soon to be able to finalize both the content needs of the platform and also the wildlife we can capture."

POLITICALLY SPEAKING

BY MEAGAN KASHTY

When Trevor Birney was first reminded of Elián González, the young Cuban boy found floating in the Florida straits on Thanksgiving Day 1999, he couldn't have known how relevant revisiting the tense history between U.S. and Cuba 17 years ago would be to modern-day audiences.

It began during a trip to Miami in 2008, the night of former U.S. President Barack Obama's election, when Birney saw a newspaper story about how Florida's Cuban-American community was voting for the Democratic party in large numbers for the first time "since Elián González."

"It was particularly striking, the difference between younger and older generations," says Birney, a Belfast-based investigative journalist and founder of Fine Point Films. "It lodged with me. I began to ask questions about Elián — 'Where was he now, and what's happened to him since 2000?'"

The series of political events that unfolded between beginning production on Birney's doc *Elián* and its world premiere at April's Tribeca Film Festival — Obama's moves to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, the death of Fidel Castro, and the election of President Donald Trump, who is currently reviewing Cuban policy — would work to make the story that much more relevant to a modern American audience.

But *Elián* is not a political story being told in isolation. It's one of an unprecedented number of political history docs taking center stage in the industry this year.

Birney began to explore Elián's story back in 2012, while collaborating with Oscar-winning director and producer Alex Gibney on 2012's *Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God*. Gibney encouraged him to seek out Elián to tell his story. For the next three years, Birney's Fine Point Films worked with the

It's par for the course for docs to look to the past. But are today's politically charged docs also working to change the future?

Cuban embassy in Ireland and began a dialogue with officials in Washington.

In 2015, Birney had a breakthrough. He and his team travelled to Varadero, Cuba and met up with a 21-year-old Elián, who agreed to share his side of the story.

In 1999, five-year-old González was found alone in the water, his mother having drowned trying to seek refuge in the U.S. He later became the centerpiece of an intense custody battle between his father back in Cuba and his relatives in Miami, which, in turn, brought attention to the long-brewing tensions between Fidel Castro's Cuba and the U.S.

To piece together Elián's story, Birney and his team spent hours combing through hundreds of hours of archive news footage to find segments that spoke to something bigger than just the iconic image of González confronted by an armed federal marshal, there to remove him from the home of his Miami relatives and return him to his father in Cuba.

"We tried to find those perspectives that may have been rushed at the time," explains Birney. "Time capsules of this moment that we're ready to bring to the world now in the film."

According to Amy Entelis, CNN Worldwide's EVP talent and content development, and an executive producer on

the doc, *Elián* strikes right at the heart of the work CNN Films is trying to do.

"We're interested in subjects that represent a moment in time that our audience is familiar with," she says.

"That moment can be fleeting, and while a story may make headlines one day, then the next story happens and that moment is gone."

Entelis says

telling stories like Elián's allows a much deeper experience around the issue that you couldn't necessarily experience by watching a newscaster's daily coverage. And in the case of *Elián*, sometimes "you need the passage of time to look back and



"We tried to find those perspectives that may have been rushed at the time. Time capsules of this moment that we're ready to bring now in the film."



Trevor Birney's *Elián* premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in April.

"I think with any smart documentary you allow audiences to come to their own conclusions."

see new viewpoints you wouldn't necessarily have noticed before."

Elián is part of a broader trend across other docs and festivals. New York's Tribeca festival lineup, for example, was dominated this year by docs focusing on politically charged and controversial subjects.

Elián González, Ronald Reagan, Frank Serpico, Roger Stone, Rodney King and WeCopwatch member Ramsey Orta, were among the figures highlighted. The films explore subject matter that still make headlines today, from fake news to race relations and immigration.

Cara Cusumano, Tribeca's director of programming, says including politically driven docs in this year's lineup was a priority.

The 2017 edition of Sunny Side of the Doc, which takes place in June in La Rochelle, France has set "historic" as this year's theme, with an aim of putting into perspective what history has taught us in light of what's currently going on in the world.

"We're experiencing a somewhat particular year politically — with the American presidential election, Brexit and even the upcoming elections in France and Germany," explains Yves Jeanneau, CEO of Sunny Side Markets. "During this time of elections, ideas, recollections and stories have consequently resurfaced, along with the strong feeling that we must draw lessons from history. This simply highlights the importance of documentary film in our global political life." This year, Sunny Side will host twice as many history project pitches.



Toronto's Hot Docs Film Festival, where *Elián* had its international premiere, followed a similar philosophy.

"There is a willingness, a desire and need for filmmakers to make these deep dives into issues and subjects and provide us with a holistic perspective on the state of the world," Shane Smith, director of programming for the Toronto-based festival, told *realscreen* days before the festival began.

Alexandra Anderson, a professor at Toronto's Ryerson University who specializes in documentary filmmaking and Cuban cinema,

says doc filmmakers have always been adept at examining news stories in a broader context.

"Documentaries always go behind the headlines, taking in-depth looks at subjects like *Elián*," she says.

Awards ceremonies and theatrical releases tend to showcase docs with a subject that's usually strongly human interest, Anderson says, but film festivals are often the best places to see more politically charged docs.

And while Anderson says there's always been a strong current of political discussion in documentary, a deeper look into the events of the past that have made up our current democratic systems is certainly a focus today.

Lois Vossen, who has been with 'Independent Lens' since its inception as a primetime series on PBS, says she's seen a change in the audiences who are craving political docs that deal with modern-day issues. "With the polarization of media and with some outlets suffering financially and having to close down their international bureaus, we found there was a hunger among audiences to understand international stories because they weren't getting those stories on a daily basis anymore."

Vossen says audiences were asking for stories from Iraq, Afghanistan, India — political touchpoints from around the world where a director embedded in a culture for years could tell a deeper story than a reporter might be able to.

"Viewers want to understand other communities and they want to contextualize what's happening with the current day political situations," she says.

In that vein, Vossen is always looking for films that add a new perspective to an issue that's been around for a while — such as immigration, incarceration and racial identity. The goal, ultimately, is that films that cover a past event make some commentary on the current political state.

"We try not to make any overt statements," Vossen says. "But I think with any smart documentary, you allow audiences to come to their own conclusions and takeaways as to how it relates to their lives."

Vossen points to films from 'Independent Lens' that she thinks do just that. *The Last Laugh*, which premiered in April, asks audiences to look at the tragic impact of the Holocaust and how it has become frighteningly relevant following comparisons to the current situation in Syria. *Let the Fire Burn* recounts the steps that led to a horrific tragedy on May 13, 1985, when a longtime feud between the city of Philadelphia and a controversial radical urban group led to a house being burnt down with the activists inside. And last year's *The Witness* tackled



the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese, a New York woman who was attacked while 38 people allegedly did nothing to help her (although the doc debunks that claim).

"A lens back into both recent and decades-old history continues to be not only relevant, but also vital to help us understand what's happening today," says Vossen.

"Even if you look at the recent Academy Awards nominations, there were some very hard-hitting films that tackled political topics that you didn't necessarily see in past years," says Anderson.

"There seems to be a group really trying to engage the public on political issues — almost with an urgency." •

031

VARIETY *Insight*

20% off promotional rate

Offer only valid for new subscribers.*



Keeping Hollywood In-the-Know Since 1999.

The only data solution that comprehensively tracks people, projects, and companies across television, film, and digital entertainment.

For more information, please contact

Alyssa Adkisson, Manager of Business Development, aadkisson@variety.com or (323) 617-9262.

Mention Realscreen West and receive 20% off your subscription. Offer expires July 8th, 2017.

Scripted

A CONFERENCE & MARKET FOR THE
GLOBAL SCRIPTED CONTENT BIZ

We're
moving
to LA!

W HOLLYWOOD HOTEL • LOS ANGELES
• NOVEMBER 7-8, 2017 •

North America's preeminent conference and market
for the business of scripted entertainment.

MEET THE ADVISORY BOARD

CO-CHAIRS



Christina Davis
EVP, Drama Series
Development
CBS Entertainment



Philippe Maigret
President
ITV Studios America



Elizabeth Bradley
VP, Content
Netflix



Barry Jossen
A+E Studios



Damian Keogh
Commercial Director
Lookout Point



Pippa Lambert
Senior TV Agent
WME



Nina Lederman
EVP, Scripted
Programming
All3Media America



Francesca Orsi
Co-Head, Drama Series
HBO



Kari Skogland
CEO
Mad Rabbit



Philipp Steffens
Head of Fiction
RTL



Christian Vesper
EVP & Creative
Director, Global Drama
FremantleMedia

REGISTER BEFORE JULY 7 TO SAVE \$200!

SCRIPTEDSUMMIT.COM



From the roaring 1920s to the radical '60s, each episode in the 5 x 60-minute series seeks to capture the spirit of the decade.

BY DARAH HANSEN

With a treasure trove of rare archival footage and photos, Arrow Media's production of *America in Color* for Smithsonian Channel looks to breathe new life into the nation's epic past.

In living color

America in Color feels surprisingly contemporary for a television series that explores as its central thesis the historic moments of the 20th Century that shaped the United States and, in turn, the world.

A massive explosion rocks the opening moments of episode one of the Arrow Media-produced blue chip archival project, set to air on Smithsonian Channel July 2. The episode features rarely seen clips of Manhattan in chaos following a shocking act of terror: At lunchtime on Sept. 16, 1920, a bomb hidden by alleged anarchists inside a horse-drawn carriage was detonated outside 23 Wall Street. The blast killed 38 people and left another 143 seriously wounded.

But for a few details, the story could be ripped straight from today's headlines.

That the images we see on screen, though nearly 100 years old, have been painstakingly rendered into full color from their original black and white, and made 4K-ready, makes the scene all-the-more impactful.

It's a theme that holds constant across the series' five hour-long episodes, each harnessing the power of color to refresh and re-energize the important stories of the decade they represent. From the epic excesses of 1920s through to radical renaissance in the 1960s, the goal is to dust off the past and forge a sense personal connection among viewers to moments that might otherwise be dismissed as distant and dated.

"Life was not lived in black and white. History was not lived in black and white. It was lived in color and we are simply putting the color back into it," David Royle, EVP of programming and production at Smithsonian Channel, tells *realscreen*.

America in Color marks Smithsonian's biggest commission in the costly and time-consuming realm of colorization in almost a decade, and the bar is set high. The network's 2009 release of *Apocalypse*, an ambitious, multi-million-dollar archival series produced and directed by the

French husband-and-wife team of Daniel Costelle and Isabelle Clarke, was hailed for the tasteful and detailed color restoration treatment given to Second World War footage. The series took years to complete and won impressive audiences of all ages in virtually every continent — a coup for any historic production, never mind one focused on well-mined war stories of yore, says Royle.

"At that stage, a lot of people said that everything that could be written and shown about World War II had been seen before. But the colorizing process (Costelle and Clarke) used was so precise and so nuanced and so beautiful that it really brought the footage to life," he recalls of the project's success.

In greenlighting *America in Color*, Smithsonian is looking to match, or even best, *Apocalypse*'s broad appeal.

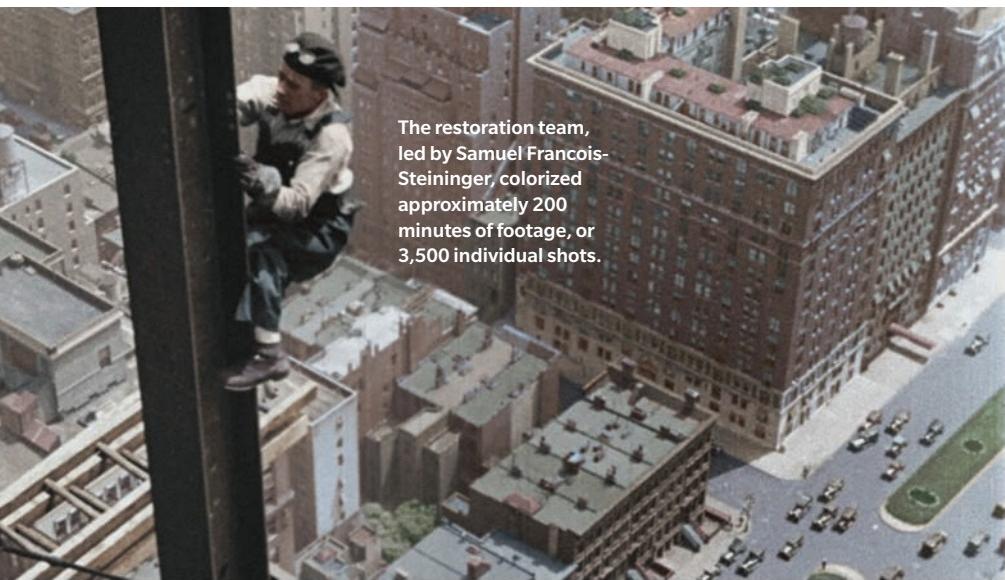
"We wanted to take on another grand subject and we felt that the history of America, well, you really couldn't get bigger in scale than that...The growth and evolution of America over the last century or so has been epic. It is also part of the international popular culture. It transcends narrow nationalism," says Royle.

Arrow was keen to come on board. The UK-based indie had already established a long relationship with Smithsonian. The company had also shown a willingness to tackle technically difficult storytelling formats, evidenced by the 2014 production of *Live from Space*, a live broadcast from the International Space Station for National Geographic.

Says Nick Metcalfe, Arrow's executive director for *America in Color*: "It's the kind of thing you dream of."

Still, wrangling the sheer scope of the project into order proved daunting. Over two years, Arrow's production team spent an estimated 6,000 hours scouring obscure archives and university libraries, and digging through forgotten family vaults and private collections to uncover rare and valuable photos and clips from the 1920s, '30s, '40s, '50s and '60s.

All of the imagery (a whopping 27 miles



of film) had to be condensed and sorted into 60-minute segments, with stories woven in a way that feels at once exciting and familiar. On a practical level, the task was completed by drawing up lists of the narratives researchers believed would best define the assigned decade, without losing any of the critical details of the era.

034

"Inevitably, we ended up with way too many stories and had to whittle them down. Then, sometimes we got footage and thought, actually, some of these stories need to play out much longer," says Metcalfe.

"We had to find the right balance," agrees Tom Brisley, Arrow's creative director, noting the strategy

was to mix the big stories of the decade with those that are lesser known, but equally powerful.

In a particularly poignant example, the series features images of five-year-old William Hinds of Portland, Maine in a segment dedicated to the booming auto industry. The child, we soon learn, was killed when he was struck by a Model T Ford in 1924, one of the first recorded vehicle-related deaths.

The series is driven and held together through narration, rather than expert or first-person interviews. The narrator in this case is actor, director and screenwriter Liev Schreiber — a nod to *Apocalypse*, which featured the voice of another A-list celebrity, Martin Sheen.

Of course, this being a color restoration project, finding the right partner — with the particular mix of technical and artistic skill — was essential to bringing the stories to life. And, as luck would have it, Brisley had met Samuel Francois-Steininger at MIPCOM just prior to the series' commission. The Paris-based CEO, producer and creative director of Composite Films had instantly wowed Brisley with his eye for detail and artistic flare.

"He (Francois-Steininger) got on his laptop and he showed me the black-and-white footage

TIRED OF LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT SHOT?

Let us do the work for you!

WPA Film Library has the best in historic and contemporary stock footage.

- History • Politics • Pop Culture • Americana • Music

708.460.0555
sales@wpafilmlibrary.com
wpafilmlibrary.com



REUTERS

Historic moments that captivate your audience

reuters.screenocean.com

screenocean[®]

Search and license Reuters news video archive online through Screenocean

Reuters and Screenocean present one of the most comprehensive collections of rights-cleared international news footage in the world. Featuring global events from three centuries, visitors can now browse and license historic stories that have shaped the world we live in today.



License Reuters news video footage at reuters.screenocean.com

alongside the color. That's when I knew we were onto something special," says Brisley. "You know, he's 32 years old and all he cares about is making the color original and making it look as amazing as he can."

For his part, Francois-Steininger, who's lent his restoration skills to historical documentaries such as Raoul Peck's Oscar-nominated *I Am Not Your Negro*, thinks of the job as not unlike that of a police detective.

"One of the key points is to go as deep as possible in the research and leave almost nothing to the interpretation, or has not been verified," he says. "It's quite a long and dedicated and passionate process to find those answers."

For *America in Color*, he and his team colorized approximately 200 minutes of footage, or 3,500 individual shots. For every shot, the same exacting process was necessary: What was the color of the tie that particular person wore on that particular day? What color was the sky? The cars? The wallpaper?

Drawing from a myriad of iconographic and historical sources, including books, re-enactors, experts, websites, biopics, paintings and postcards, says Francois-Steininger, "We

investigate every element — the buildings, environment, background, key figures. Every single element has to be researched and checked with the resources at our disposal."

The results are intended

to honor each era.

The 1920s episode, for instance, draws inspiration from the work of photographer Charles Zoller — the first American to use an early form of color photography called autochrome. Zoller's portfolio, taken between the beginning of the 20th Century to the mid-1930s, "helped us capture the tints relative to the period and gave us valuable and reliable information, notably on clothes, fabrics and everyday objects," says Francois-Steininger in an email. "Thanks to them, we got the certainty, for instance, that the 1920s buses in New York City were green."

For Royle, the finished product represents a

breakthrough in historic docuseries production, pushing beyond the technological and emotional gains made by *Apocalypse*. Indeed, the network is already considering greenlighting more episodes.

Watching the first installments, Royle found himself marvelling at the remarkable details of buttons, hats and gloves of bygone eras, while discovering new meaning in well-known events that had previously eluded him.

A color-restored scene in the 1920s episode, showing a sea of hooded and bare-faced members of the Ku Klux Klan marching through Washington, D.C., left him particularly shaken.

"I've seen that image many times before in black and white, but when you see it in color, it is just absolutely haunting," Royle says. "I just kept reflecting on the old images, thinking, 'This could really be happening now. It's not that different.'" •

"History was not lived in black and white. It was lived in color and we are simply putting the color back into it."

"I think it's inevitable that people will come to find the documentary a more compelling and more important kind of film than fiction."

— ALBERT MAYSLES



A PROUD SOURCE OF NON-FICTION FOOTAGE
FOR 15 YEARS AND COUNTING

Music makes it work

Audio Network makes
it work for you

**World class music
Global licensing
Expert service**

For more information contact

US

+1 646 688 4320

nyoffice@audionetwork.com

CANADA

+1 905 425 0597

randi.gold@audionetwork.com





Nature's orchestra

Jasha Klebe and Jacob Shea layer the music of Hans Zimmer with the sounds of the wild to paint an intimate audio portrait of Planet Earth.

BY SELINA CHIGNALL

Pictured: (Left to right)
Jasha Klebe, Hans Zimmer
and Jacob Shea.

The ominous slithering of a snake over the pebbles on a beach as a baby iguana's feet fly on the rocks are the first sounds to set spines tingling. Then, a drum beats — once — building to a heart-pulsating frenzy as multiple snakes join in on the hunt for the iguana as it runs for its life (literally) across the screen.

This is perhaps the most memorable scene among a banquet of visual treats offered by the BBC's 2016 natural history blockbuster *Planet Earth II*. The acclaimed six-part series takes audiences into some of the most remote places in the world, unveiling landscapes from the highest mountain peaks to arid and harsh deserts — and the fascinating, and sometimes deadly, creatures that live within them.

Legendary composer Hans Zimmer, whose Oscar-winning musical talents are featured in dozens of films and series, including Netflix's *The Crown* and National Geographic's *Genius*, is the creative force behind *Planet Earth II*'s sweeping theme. The broader task of connecting the series through sound fell to Jasha Klebe and Jacob Shea of the music production company Bleeding Fingers Music, a creative partnership between Extreme Music and Zimmer's RCI Global based in Santa Monica. In an interview with *realscreen*, Klebe and Shea share how they sought to bring cohesion to the series via an intimate score that took seven months to

produce, including four days in London with a 50-piece orchestra.

"Living up to the challenge of the success of the last *Planet Earth* (which aired in 2006, and scored by George Fenton), and the extraordinary music that was done for that, we wanted to get it right," says Klebe of the magnitude of the project.

This time around, the strategy was to bring audiences even closer to the natural world using crystal-clear sound effects captured by the camera crew in the field, such as the rustling of the grass and rocks crackling under the snakes' bellies. Those sounds were then woven into the score.

"We tried to use whatever made the scene feel most immediate — whether electronics or orchestra, anything from the musical world that we could bring to heighten the experience, we brought," says Shea.

Producers on the series, many of them scientists and biologists, worked closely alongside the animals and were able to explain to the composers what type of sensation or emotional response they were hoping to elicit in each episode. In the episode on deserts, for example, director Ed Charles was looking to express a landscape reminiscent of an alien planet. To that end, Shea says the musicians were captivated by a swarm of

locusts that made an "eerie, terrible" sound that they were able to filter and manipulate to match the artistic vision.

"So we would feed that sound of locusts in at different times to keep the audience on their toes."

The pair say they were always mindful to ensure each element in the score was good enough to measure up to the same production quality as all the other elements, from visuals to editing.

"We musically felt the pressure," says Shea.

Working with Zimmer, a first for the composers, only made the experience more powerful. They describe Zimmer as a "masterful storyteller" who knows how to get to the heart of a scene.

"He was supportive of us trying things out and letting us have our vision play out," says Shea.

Often, music production in documentaries dictates that the score maintain a sense of impartiality so the viewers aren't being told how to feel. *Planet Earth II* is an outlier as it openly celebrates the natural world in all its vibrancy, says Shea. As such, the series provides an opportunity to go beyond the constraints of impartiality.

"It's about getting us excited about our planet and in that way, musically, the sky's the limit." •

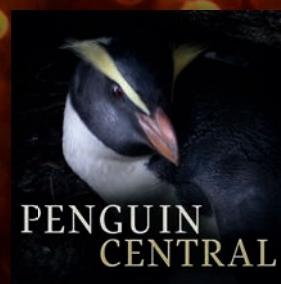
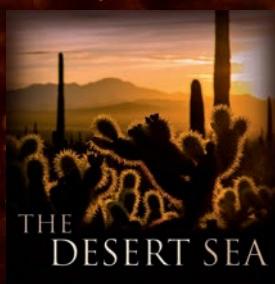
"It's about getting us excited about our planet."

WONDER.
MAGIC.
DISCOVERY.

ZDF ENTERPRISES CONGRATULATES

NHNZ

ON 40 YEARS OF OUTSTANDING
FACTUAL PROGRAMS



We're proud to be part of this long history.

BY DANIELE ALCINII

PRIDE OF THE PACIFIC

As NHNZ turns 40, MD Kyle Murdoch takes a look back at the journey from Dunedin production shop to global powerhouse in the natural history and non-fiction sector.

At the foot of a picturesque inlet on New Zealand's South Island lies the Victorian-era city of Dunedin. It's in this university town, with a population of 120,200, that you'll find a factual TV production company with the reach to take on the world.

Founded in 1977 as TVNZ's natural history unit, NHNZ has, against all odds, seamlessly outgrown the dramatic hills of New Zealand's Otago Peninsula to become a global powerhouse in the natural history and non-fiction sector.

So just how did an indie headquartered in the farthest city in the world from London (19,100 km/11,870 mi) manage to not only survive, but also thrive?

Well, it looked for a partnership a little closer to home.

"When we first started exporting, we made natural history films and we sold them to this little broadcaster in Maryland that only had distribution of 200,000 homes," says Kyle Murdoch, managing director of NHNZ, as the indie marks its 40th year in business.

That network, Murdoch reveals, was the Discovery Channel, which would grow up to become the global mass media and entertainment company Discovery Communications. With the newfound relationship cemented, financial security would be hand-delivered to NHNZ's door

during an era of economic uncertainty when New Zealand's dollar faltered to new lows against the U.S. greenback.

The inflated American income throughout the 1990s allowed the Kiwi company to develop twice as many series and documentaries than its competitors in the South Pacific.

It didn't hurt that, in 1992, NHNZ became the first producer to winter in Antarctica with a pair of documentaries produced by legendary filmmaker Max Quinn. The two films, *Emperors of Antarctica* and *The Longest Night*, are credited with directly developing positive inroads into the U.S. market and helping NHNZ establish its relationship with Discovery.

"We could spend years in the field rather than months from our competitors," Murdoch says. "That gave us a huge competitive advantage from a business point of view."

NHNZ's first transformation would come in 1997, when TVNZ sold off the natural history unit as part of the state broadcaster's cost-cutting and restructuring exercises. The factual TV production house would become a subsidiary of Fox International Channels under David Haslingden. Then, in October 2012, Haslingden acquired a 100% stake in the Kiwi producer — a move that would ultimately prove beneficial.



Murdoch

Last August, NHNZ secured an agreement with China Central Television (CCTV) to coproduce five major projects, including the ground-breaking docuseries *Big Pacific*.

"There were advantages to being part of Fox, for sure, but now that we're unencumbered by that corporate environment as a true indie there's much less red tape," Murdoch notes.

NHNZ is now part of the RACAT Group family, sitting alongside Singapore's Beach House Pictures and Australia's Northern Pictures.

The Dunedin-based shop, with its 80-plus employees, has continued to build on its strong foundations with a diverse and creative slate, producing across natural history through to ob doc series and dramatic first-person narratives for the U.S. and Asian markets. In China alone NHNZ has become the largest outside producer of documentary content in the country and, last August, secured an agreement with China Central Television (CCTV) to coproduce five major projects, including the premium blue chip series *Big Pacific*, slated to air on PBS in June.

Last year, the little indie took its biggest swing yet, launching its Washington, DC offshoot, Outrun the Sun Productions, to service the U.S. market with four to six character-led commissions per year.

Asked what the next five years look like, Murdoch sees the enduring shop becoming part of a series of companies under the NHNZ umbrella: Outrun the Sun, children's zoology channel ZooMoo, archive unit NHNZ Moving Images and mobile gaming division Runaway Play.

"We localize quickly in a region and become part of the fabric of that community, and then all of a sudden growth becomes a lot easier." •

Premium midform takes shape

Quick poll: Who knows what ‘unboxing’ is? How about ‘creepypasta’? What about ‘mukbang’? Believe it or not, these are video formats that millions watch all over the world.

Unboxing is an unscripted format that makes you feel like it’s Christmas morning all year long. Creepypasta? No, it’s not scary spaghetti. It’s actually a way to share fireside ghost stories around the world. Mukbang may sound completely absurd, but people will watch for hours while creators sit in front of their cameras while gorging on thousands of calories.

Welcome to the mobile-first generation where trends that may seem esoteric are taking over a screen near you. All you need is a smartphone, tablet or desktop to tap into them.

And we’re not only seeing a rise in content formats, but also a whole new category of formats. At go90, for instance, we’re seeing a growth in what we call “premium midform” emerge as our sweet spot.

Netflix and Hulu are dominating binge-watchable content that is 30 minutes or longer, and TV is doing the same for appointment-based viewing. Meanwhile, social media, editorial websites and short-form video platforms such as YouTube are dominating the 10-minute-and-under space.

At go90, our research shows that the mobile-first audience is spending more time watching videos throughout their day and on the go during the week. And the premium midform format is proving the perfect length for these regular “downtime/watchtime” periods. In fact, our analytics tell us that premium midform is emerging as the preferred format for mobile-first viewers.

Our hit series — including a nonfiction slate such as *Snooki & JWOWW: Moms with Attitude*, *MVP* with Rob Gronkowski, *Young Guns* and *QB1* from Peter Berg and Film45 — are anywhere from eight to 30 minutes in length.

So what does premium mean in this context? The concept of quality or premium programming is completely fluid now. It’s not always equivalent to production value.

To test this, I actually decided to take a poll among a small (but cute) focus group — my kids — to see what they watch and how they watch it. My three-year-old son, Tyler, watches *The Wiggles*, an Australian TV show that debuted 26 years ago that he’s discovering for the first time on streaming platforms. And most of the time my daughters, Malin, eight, and Olivia, seven, stream FUNnel Vision, a YouTube channel. But when asked what their favorites are, they cite *Harry Potter*,

Moana and other blockbuster hits. They’ve taught me that premium is fluid. Variety, choice and availability rule. And they don’t want less, they want more. They watch it on any screen and often simultaneously.

Nielsen’s Total Audience Report tells us that the average person spends nine hours a day consuming media on a range of screens. That’s more time spent consuming media than sleeping and eating combined.

So how does this impact how we program for this new generation of media consumers?

Context matters. At YouTube, unscripted formats work because that ecosystem is built on UGC (user-generated content), vloggers and personalities. At Vessel, we found a deeply engaged audience around tech unboxing videos and IT culture because we had a large community of tech savants. At go90, we find that live sports and scripted dramas perform best because we have dedicated sports fans who love football, basketball and soccer, and millennials who love scripted originals with their favorite talent.

Content within context matters. Each platform and its audience is completely unique. You must cater to what works best for that specific community. What works on TV won’t necessarily work on digital, and vice versa. To take it one step further, what works on Facebook or Snapchat doesn’t necessarily work on Hulu, Netflix or go90. You need to create content with specificity and authenticity to each platform.

I leave you with this: Digital innovation and the mobile-first generation are expanding how we tell stories through new formats, new talent and data-driven development. There’s a new hybrid model — part art, part science, and, what remains the same, a little bit of magic. It’s creating more opportunity in content, programming and distribution for all of us in the industry. We all know we are in the golden age of television, but we’re embarking upon the golden age of content. We can shape the opportunity beyond that first screen by coming together, country by country, screen by screen, to tell the best stories on the planet.

Ivana Kirkbride is chief content officer and responsible for the leadership of go90, alongside CTO Richard Tom. Ivana oversees creator relations, content acquisition and partner management. She is also responsible for content strategy, development and programming, channel mix, editorial and merchandizing strategy across live sports, originals, primetime and best-of-the-web. Previously, Ivana was head of content at Vessel. She spent five years as a key executive launching YouTube into Funded Channels and Original Programming.



BY IVANA KIRKBRIDE

Audience tastes are evolving almost as quickly as the platforms on which programming is being watched.

Ivana Kirkbride, chief content officer for go90, weighs in on the shift, and how a mobile-first generation is driving demand for a new format category.

BY MICHAEL CASCIO



Network veteran Michael Cascio makes the case for when feedback is necessary, even helpful...and when it's not. Here are his top suggestions to help ease the production process.

It's the bane of producers: You submit a carefully crafted rough cut and get back reams of single-spaced, nit-picking notes, gutting your hard work and forcing more time and expense in the edit room for no apparent reason.

It's the bane of networks: You commission a show and get back an incomprehensible, steaming mess of footage that has no story, looks nothing like what you ordered and will fail miserably if it airs. You have no choice but to fix it. With lots of notes.

In the factual TV community, "notes" are a necessary evil. Everyone accepts that networks and distributors need to get what they want, especially when financial investments are substantial. But do all those notes make a difference?

I tried — and failed — to cut down on my own note-giving while I was a network EVP and SVP at A&E, Animal Planet and National Geographic, and I supervised talented EPs who were much better at it. But I often worried that with too much interference, we could undermine the talents

Network “notes”: In demand or out of control?

of our production partners and take away their incentive to fix things on their own.

At the same time, the networks are always wary of what a colleague called “being sizzled” — buying a show on a great sizzle reel but by the first delivered cut, they’re forced to make chicken salad out of chicken waste. Ideally, if you pay for a program, it’s up to the producer to deliver what you want — not the network.

So, who’s right?

I’m working independently now, and with some perspective, I can tell you that sometimes those notes are needed, and sometimes they’re not. Here are some universal truths:

Producers can get too close to the material.

Sitting in an edit room for days can cause myopia that good network execs can correct. They often have experience at how best to grab the audience, how to improve pacing, writing, flow and teases, as well as dealing with marketing, scheduling, content standards and sales. One longtime producer told me the best note she ever got from a network EP was a loving KISS — “keep it simple, stupid” — providing help to “reduce the complicated to the simple.”

Generalized notes can be confusing. The worst? Notes that are so broad that you can’t figure out what to do. Comments like, “It sort of lacks energy” or “It doesn’t work for me” drive producers crazy. One veteran producer told me he once got a comment scrawled in the margin of a script saying simply, “What is this sh-t?” Not exactly useful or inspirational.

Specific notes help the most. The best? Notes that point out the important places that need addressing and why they need changing, offering suggestions or improvements, but letting the producers take it from there in case they have a better idea. By being precise yet flexible, it allows the production team some liberty to continue being creative and not just reactive.

Keep the production process in mind. There are many horror stories about networks asking for substantive changes at fine cut, picture lock, or even after it airs. No matter how many costs are covered — if they’re covered — the requested changes should be commensurate with the time and effort that disrupts the schedule and relationship.

Make early cuts watchable. You’d be surprised how many times a network’s senior manager looks at an early cut and criticizes the scratch track audio or fuzzy video — even when they know it’s temporary. Producers make mistakes by assuming everyone can share their vision, even if there are huge portions missing. Here’s a tip: Make your rough cut look like a fine cut. And make your fine cut look perfect. A slick-looking video is less likely to be criticized.

Too many people give too many notes. Often there may be one set from the EP and additional comments from higher-ups. When bosses weigh in with conflicting notes, they undercut their EPs, cause chaos in the production pipeline and quash motivation. Networks should coordinate notes so producers get one set of comments per cut.

Remember that network execs report to bosses. Inside scoop: Some bosses love to see their EPs whipping up on producers — it shows they’re really on top of things. When a program gets to the big boss level, there’s an all-too-familiar response from the underling: “Yes, boss, but you should have seen the rough cut. It was a mess.” Implication: “But I fixed it!” And don’t underestimate fear. The reactions of execs are often all about hedging bets — trying to predict if the boss will like it or at least avoid triggering an outburst, which could get them fired.

At the networks, there’s an enormous amount of pressure to deliver superior programming that meets their goals and standards. At the same time, execs should realize that producers are partners who actually pay your salary. Their shows attract an audience that advertisers or subscribers want, and thus bring in the money that pays you. Without their success, you’d be working at Target. And without the network’s success, those producers would be working there, too.

Michael Cascio is president and CEO of M&C Media LLC, where he advises selected media and production partners, and produces documentaries. He is also a guest speaker and writer, whose recent article for the Sunday New York Times revealed how his experience as a backstage janitor prepared him for a career in television. At National Geographic, A&E, Animal Planet and MSNBC, Cascio has won four Emmys, two Oscar nominations and a “Producer of the Year” award. •



POWER, FEMINISM AND ROOTING FOR THE UNDERDOG

BY SELINA CHIGNALL

Legendary television producer Sheila Nevins talks to *realscreen* about her new autobiography, *You Don't Look Your Age... and Other Fairy Tales*.

Sheila Nevins is frank when asked why she thinks now is the right time to put her life story on paper, as she's done in her recently released autobiography, *You Don't Look Your Age... and Other Fairy Tales*.

"When a pot boils, why does it boil? Because it's ready," she says.

As president of HBO Documentary Films, Nevins is the force behind some of the most striking documentaries of our time, including 2017's *Cries From Syria* and *Mommy Dead and Dearest*. Her passion for exposing and exploring social issues, such as 2009's *The Alzheimer's Project* and 2012's *The Weight of the Nation*, has stirred up conversations across the nation and pushed long-simmering topics to the forefront.

Much like the docs she has nurtured over the course of a decades-long career, Nevins has a story to tell. From her early career at the U.S. Information Agency to her ascendancy at HBO, Nevins' work has gone on to win dozens of Peabody and Academy Awards. She's also won 32 individual Primetime Emmy Awards.

Now, she's decided to let it "all hang out" (her words) in a new book featuring poignant stories about work, relationships, ageism and our culture's impossible standards of beauty and youth.

Realscreen caught up with Nevins to talk about the new book, what it means to her and what professional women can learn from her climb to the top. The following Q&A has been edited for brevity and clarity.

You open your book with a story about having a facelift. Why?

I thought it was something women don't talk about and I thought it would set the ground rules for what was to follow, which is literally that there are no strings attached.

The retrospective of your life, starting from the second-wave of feminism and moving forward, I think is particularly interesting.

Judging from your voice, it would, because it covers a period [of time] you wouldn't know much about, and you would certainly understand the latter period. That's why on the audiotape, (millennial actor and writer) Lena Dunham reads it. I felt that a young person should read it so they could go through the experience they no longer have to go through.

Issues of ageism and beauty emerge throughout the book. Did you set out to explore those themes?

I wrote from a time, a place and an age. I think that the issues that I would encounter as an older woman still working in media would just come up.

Do you see this as a feminist book?

I never thought about it, but I think Gloria [Steinem] agreeing to read one of the stories made me possibly think I was on the right side of good. But I didn't consciously think about that. I didn't think I had embraced anything but my own code.

I understood feminism and I certainly believe in it and I had fought for it — but I didn't think the book was an endorsement. I thought the book was a woman's experience, both factual and fictional, that would come together in some way that would express growing up in America from the 1960s to 2017.

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Yes, if it means parity for women and equal pay and equal rights to their own body and playing ball in a man's court — absolutely.

In 2017, there is still the issue of the 'glass ceiling'. What do you think it'll take to get women in the highest positions of authority?

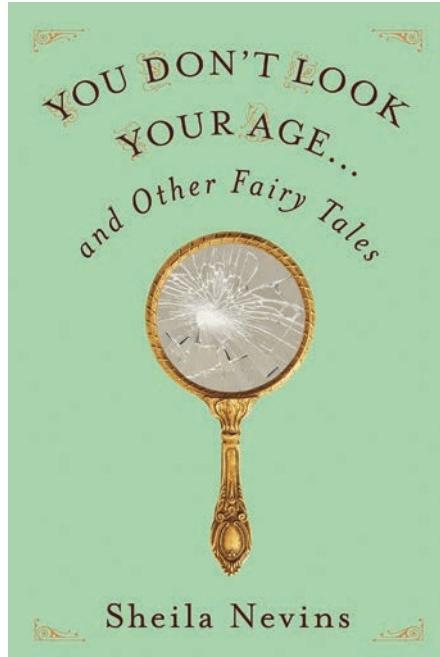
I can't answer the question. It's a deep-seated difficulty between men and women in terms of power. It may be genetic in some way, I don't really know.

Look around the world at how women are treated. There is something deep inside that pushes women out of the conversation and they have to nudge and push very hard to get back in it. It's tough — I mean, it's not like living in Syria — you still have three meals a day — but it's not an easy row. Tough waters.

In the chapter about your mother ("The Wrong Kind of Hot"), you write about an incident that made you become a champion of the less fortunate. Of the docs you've worked on, are there any that stand out to you that embody that sentiment?

Probably most of the ones I've put my heart and soul into — Syria, Tourettes, Alzheimer's, obesity. I like the underdog and the person who doesn't have an equal playing field either through a disability or through societal prejudices. I'm all for them. I never had a team. I always rooted for the underdog team.

If I was forced to watch the football game, I would ask who is the underdog team and I would root for them. It's how I'm made.



You Don't Look Your Age...and Other Fairy Tales, released May 2, is published by Flatiron Books.

ASIZE TWO walks by with the right answer to a film we are working on. She is beautiful. She is young. She gets it right. "Terrific," you say. It is not her fault that she is perfect and smart and half your age.

And the bronchitis lingers. You caught it from her. She whipped it in a week. You're onto a thousand coughs and a thousand sleepless nights. She didn't mean to have a great immune system.

Philip Roth depresses you. Does he have to be so brilliant about exits and ghosts? Why does Zuckerman have to be an aging curmudgeon and incontinent while forgetting to change his urine-stinking diaper? Any one of these signs of decay would have been enough.

And how about the woman who grabbed you on the Saks escalator? You didn't need an outfit anyway.

"Sheila, Sheila. Sheila Nevins. Remember me? Audrey Melznik, we graduated the same year from Barnard."

"Oh, yes, Audrey. Of course, I remember you." (I don't.) Children? Yes. Grandchildren? Five. Wow. All boys? Great. Harvard? Great. Oh, sorry. Two husbands. One dead. Oh, sorry. Life. Gottagogottago.

Audrey Melznik is old. She is my age. Her hair is gray. She is plumpish. She let herself be old. I hate her. Or do I respect her? What the fuck am I so upset about? Damn it. Who needs Audrey Melznik anyway?

Is it the twenty extra pounds I gained since college that've got me in a tizzy? The high-heeled shoes that now hurt? Didn't used to. Is it the affair I do/don't want and, anyway, it's too late. Is it the look on a baby colleague's face when I draw a blank on a name or don't know the band called something-or-other? "Oh, yes. I think I've heard of them." Liar. What is it that panics me so?

I think it's death. Not probably. Death. And age. Why can't I face aging with grace? Does anyone ever whistle anymore? I want to meet Mother Time with a pas de deux. A curtsey for the scythe. A refined readiness. That's all. Is all. Why, oh, why can't I . . .

I want to celebrate the longevity of my life. My mom never made it. My dad gave it to cigarettes. Why am I hiding? I am a product of magazine covers that screech: "Young at any price. Buy me!" The saleslady who says the ill-fitting clothes look great on me and make me look young — Sold! To me, the fool who buys the spiel. Please, God, I'm an atheist who wants to look young. I have enough Botox in me to detonate Iran.

Why can't I go gracefully into gravity? This aging terror. Why can't I bellow on Times Square to the disinterested passersby, "Sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, one hundred . . . and counting." Say it. Say it loud. Who am I fooling really? The health plan told the doctor and he knows. The dentist sees my teeth and he knows. And Google told Wikipedia. What's the big secret?

The secret is I don't want to say goodbye. I don't think it's fair to have worked so hard and given up so much time to not have more time.

If they can make a car without a driver, why can't they make a me that goes on?

So that's the secret. I'm angry that it's almost over, just when I understand I've just begun.

Reprinted with permission from Flatiron Books. •



ESCOBAR'S WORLD

MY STORY BY JUAN PABLO ESCOBAR

2x60'

CONTACT OUR SALES TEAM

sales@beyonddistribution.com

+44 (0) 20 7323 3444

+61 (0) 2 9437 2000

+353 (0) 1 614 6270

www.beyonddistribution.com

**BEYOND**
DISTRIBUTION